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# IDAS AND MARPESSA

HOWARD V. SUTHERLAND

UC-NRLF



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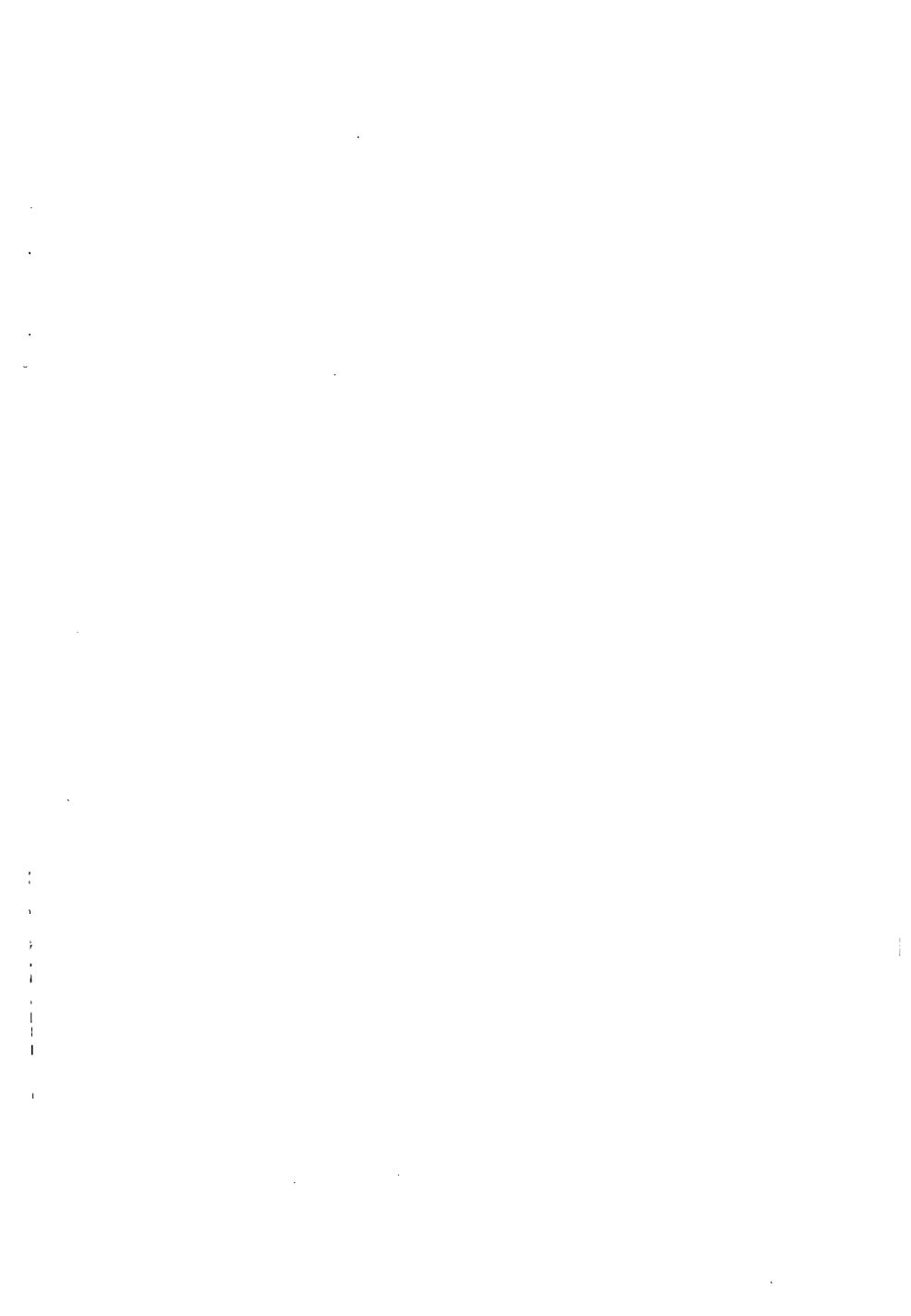
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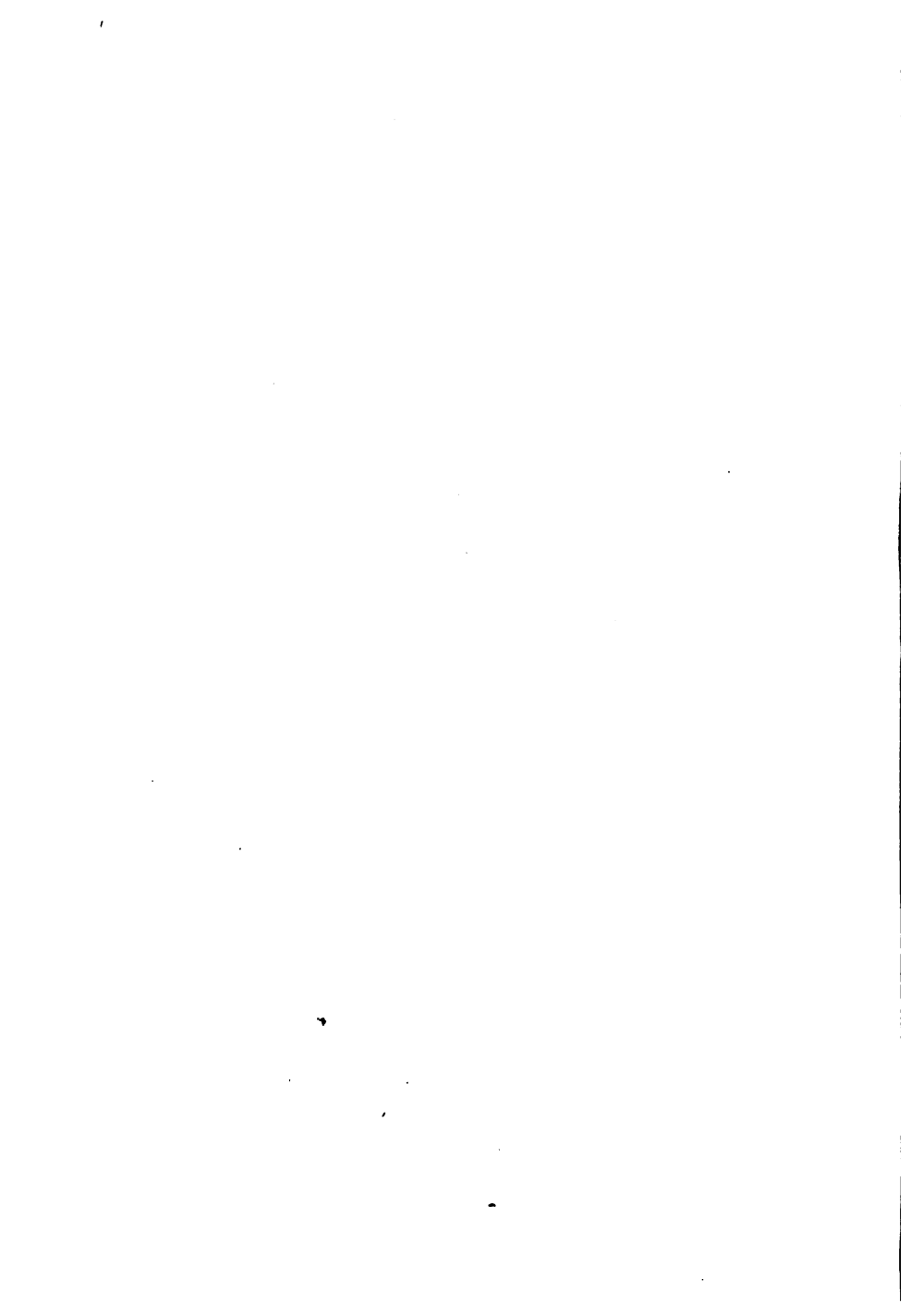
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## **IDAS AND MARPESSA**





# **IDAS AND MARPESSA**

## **An Idyll of Constancy**

**BY**

**HOWARD V. SUTHERLAND**

**Author of "Idylls of Greece"**

**A little while and we shall be as these  
Whose sighs disturb'd June's starry silences.**



**Desmond FitzGerald, Inc.**

**New York**

**1912**

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**IDAS AND MARPESSA**

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## IDAS AND MARPESSA

**A**N echo this of an immortal tale  
Of woman's love, with all its constancy.  
Idas, the friend of Jason, found at last  
In fair Marpessa peace, as most men find,  
Or soon or late, serene companionship  
In one whose lips hint more than may be told.  
For woman's love, since erst the world began,  
Is oft unuttered; but like yonder blue  
That swathes the rugged tops of solemn hills,  
Proclaims itself by silence, by a glance  
That lies like benediction on the soul.  
The melody unheard, the airy song  
Suggested by the silence, and the peace  
Behind the moveless azure—these suggest  
The love that bides behind a woman's lips.  
For even when those lips proclaim their love,  
And when her eyes shine promise, of her soul  
Her love is silent fragrance, as its scent  
The soul is of the love-desiring rose.  
In olden days the tellers of these tales,  
Who wove their fancies from the glinting webs  
The gods blew earthward, or of memories

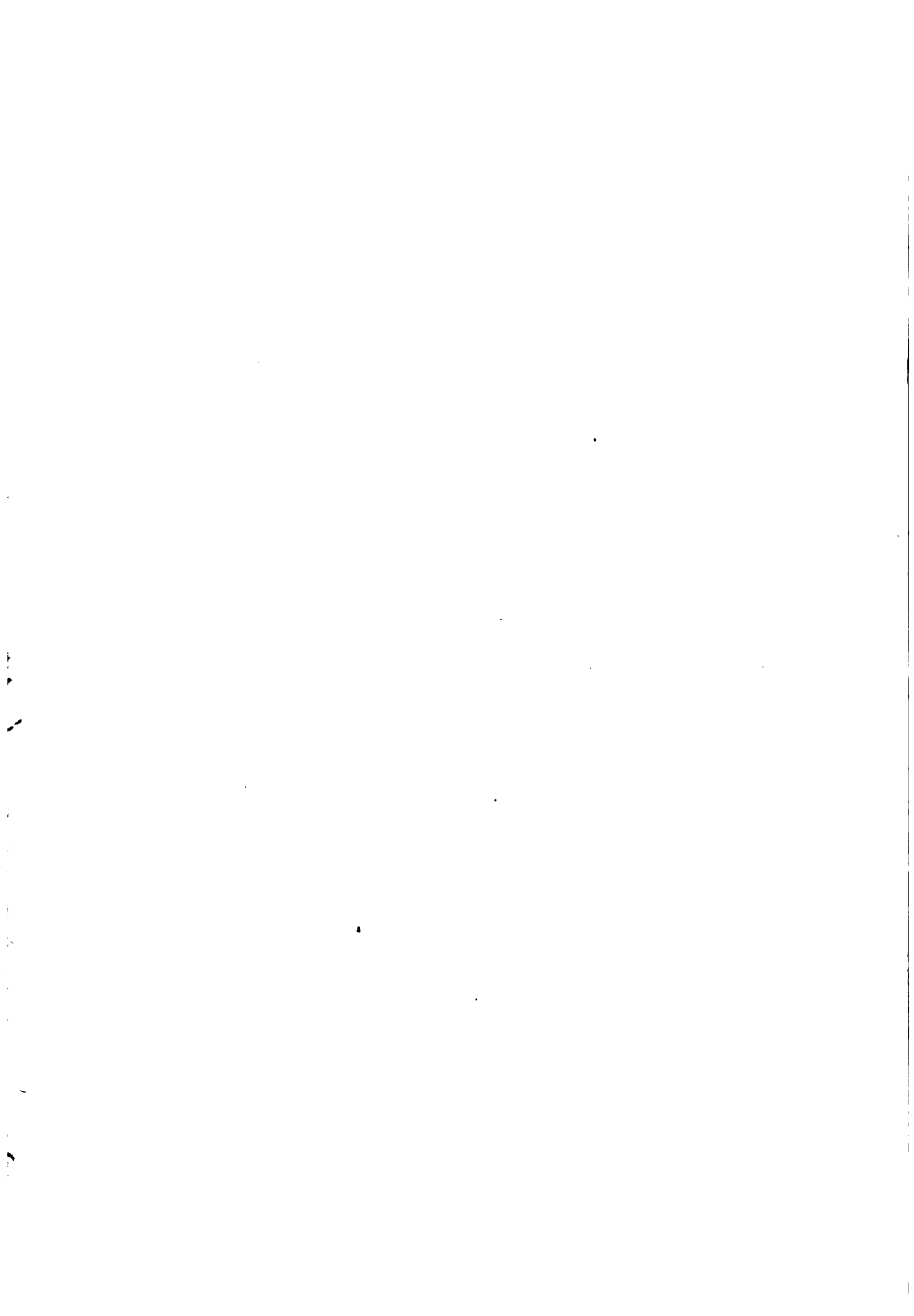
the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are illiterate has increased from 1.2 billion to 1.5 billion. The number of illiterate people in the world is projected to reach 1.7 billion by the year 2015. The number of illiterate people in the world is projected to reach 1.7 billion by the year 2015.

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

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Robb'd the hush'd Past, have told how Idas won  
The daughter of Evènus, racing him  
With hot-soled feet ; and how he conquer'd him ;  
And how the hoary runner plunged to death  
Within the waters that assumed his name  
And hid his body. But the victor claim'd  
Her hand as prize and led her, happy-eyed,  
From harsh Ætolia where her grace was lost  
To his bright valleys in Messenia.  
And she, Marpessa, in her husband found  
Her girlhood's dream, and was most satisfied  
To worship and be worship'd. In the dawn  
She rose betimes to see him seek the woods  
Before the deer were stirring ; long ere noon,  
Her household duties over, for her lord  
She watch'd without the bronzen latticed gates  
To lead him to their palace ; and when came  
The softly-breathing Night with eyes of dream,  
She raised her lips to him so brave and clean,  
Who faced the stars as he had faced the sea.  
Now, thinking back, it seems that in their woods  
My lonely spirit saw them ; hand in hand,  
Serene in silence, or with burning lips  
Vowing their hearts' indifference to time,  
Their love and their eternal constancy.  
Youth's roses had departed from her cheeks ;  
His locks were not so brown as when the waves  
Flung their pure mist upon them ; yet the gods





## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Still number'd them with lovely things, with all  
That laugh'd and look'd not backward, nor  
surmised

The night behind the promise of the day.  
And deeming each the other beautiful  
They both were young; for Age no finger lays  
On her who 's loved; and he whose lips receive  
A heart's impassion'd murmurs, fears no more  
The whisper'd warning from the lips of Death.  
And even now she bade him weave for her  
In such embroidery as color'd words  
Can hang upon the silence, all the tale  
Of Jason and his heroes; how the sea  
Curl'd angrily around them, while the wind  
Shrill'd through its teeth its heritage of hate;  
He told her of the heroes; and at last  
Of dark Medea, who had charm'd his lord,  
Or so the heroes said, and married him.  
And then he told her how the land was full  
Of awful mutterings of unseen mouths  
That said her hands were bloody. Thus he told  
The day's new gossip much as we to-day  
May gossip in the twilight. Now, as then,  
The idlest tale, if one but whisper it,  
Finds ears to give it welcome; now, as then,  
The wind is bearer of the distant deed  
And Truth is ever that which is untold.



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

And when she spoke it was of other things  
That dearer seem'd to him than tales of war.  
For she a woman was, and dream'd again  
Of that first night when o'er her blessed hand  
He bent and said he loved and worship'd her.  
That eve they linger'd by a marble fane  
Whose stilly whiteness fill'd their hearts with  
peace,

And watch'd the dusk spread purple coverlets  
Upon the mountains' summits. On the woods  
Lay darker mantles, and the vales were black  
With sleep that woo'd the cattle and the flowers.  
They spoke no word, but watch'd with wonder-  
ment

The many changes, knowing they were one  
With hills and trees and all that graced the  
vales.

Then, in her father's garden, he and she  
That summer's night had wander'd. Far away  
The heavy hills now slumber'd; in the skies  
The stars were gather'd, moving solemnly  
Their order'd ways, expectant of the moon.  
And now was heard the twitter of a bird,  
And then a cricket's protest, else so still  
The air about them that he caught the wind's  
Soft whisper in her tresses; and the while  
She look'd away, his love o'erpower'd him  
And he had touch'd those tresses with his lips.



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

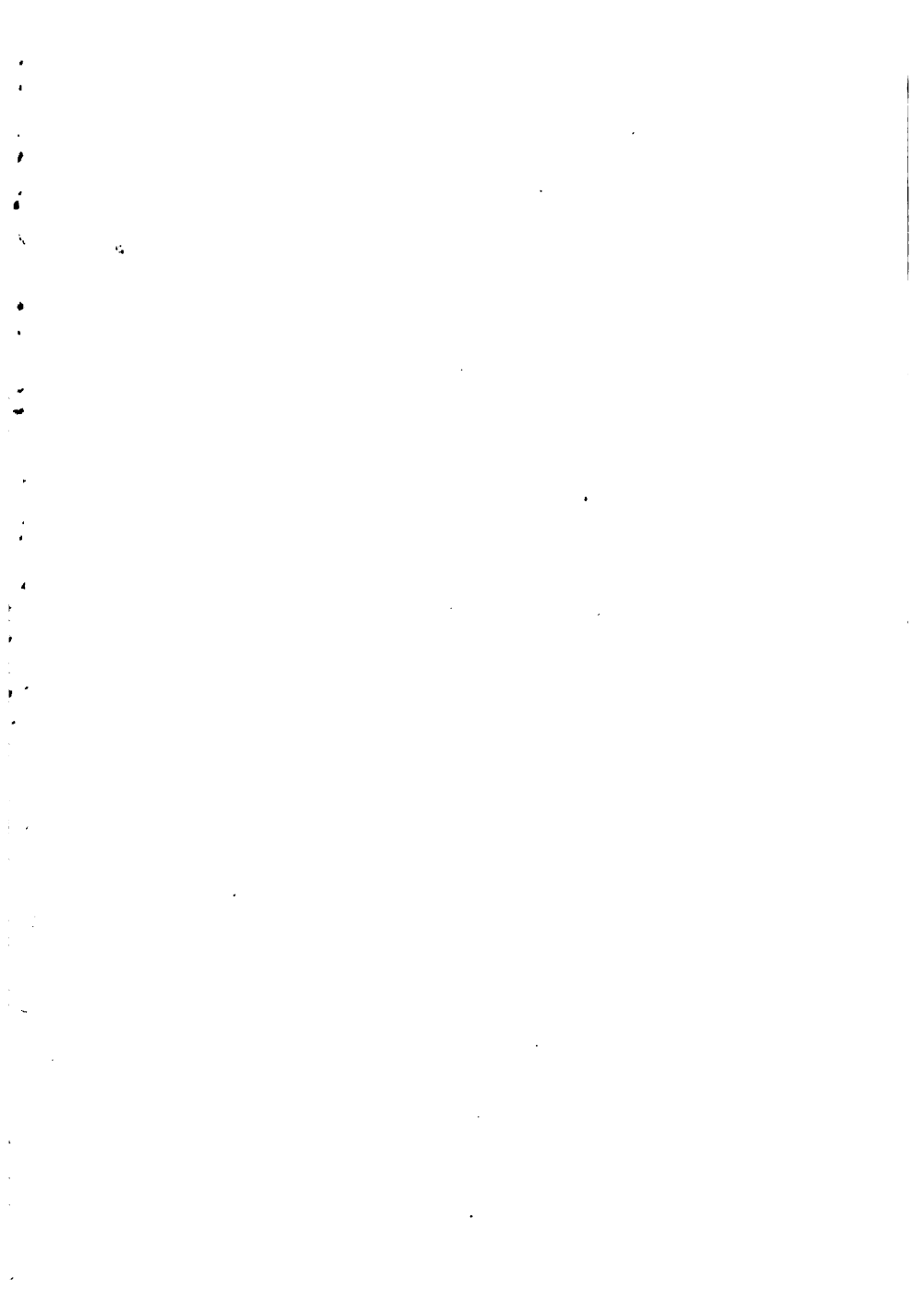
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But she was dreaming then of—Ah! who knows?  
Perhaps of him. Perhaps unknown to him  
She sensed his adoration, as the flower  
May sense at noon the pity of the dusk.  
Perhaps, although she never felt that kiss,  
Night's stilly voices whisper'd: "Thou art  
loved!";

Perhaps the stars proclaim'd it, or the wind,  
The hopeless wind, whose love is long lament.  
Perhaps she thought of whispers and of sighs,  
Of cool-cheek'd roses brought on golden morns  
With silv'ry words of greeting. Ah! who  
knows?

And wand'ring home beneath the risen moon  
She lean'd to him a little, and his arm  
Had almost dared to hold her prisoner.  
But when at last they reach'd the shadow'd  
porch,

By scented creepers shelter'd from the world,  
Again love master'd him and, ere she knew,  
His lips had seal'd his secret on her hands.  
And though his eyes were hidden now from her,  
And though his voice was silent, she was 'ware  
That this no passion was, no youthful heat  
To pass ere morning with the icy moon  
And all her chaste attendants. This was love,  
That grows in silence, love that worship is;  
Whose constant flame burns constantly above



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

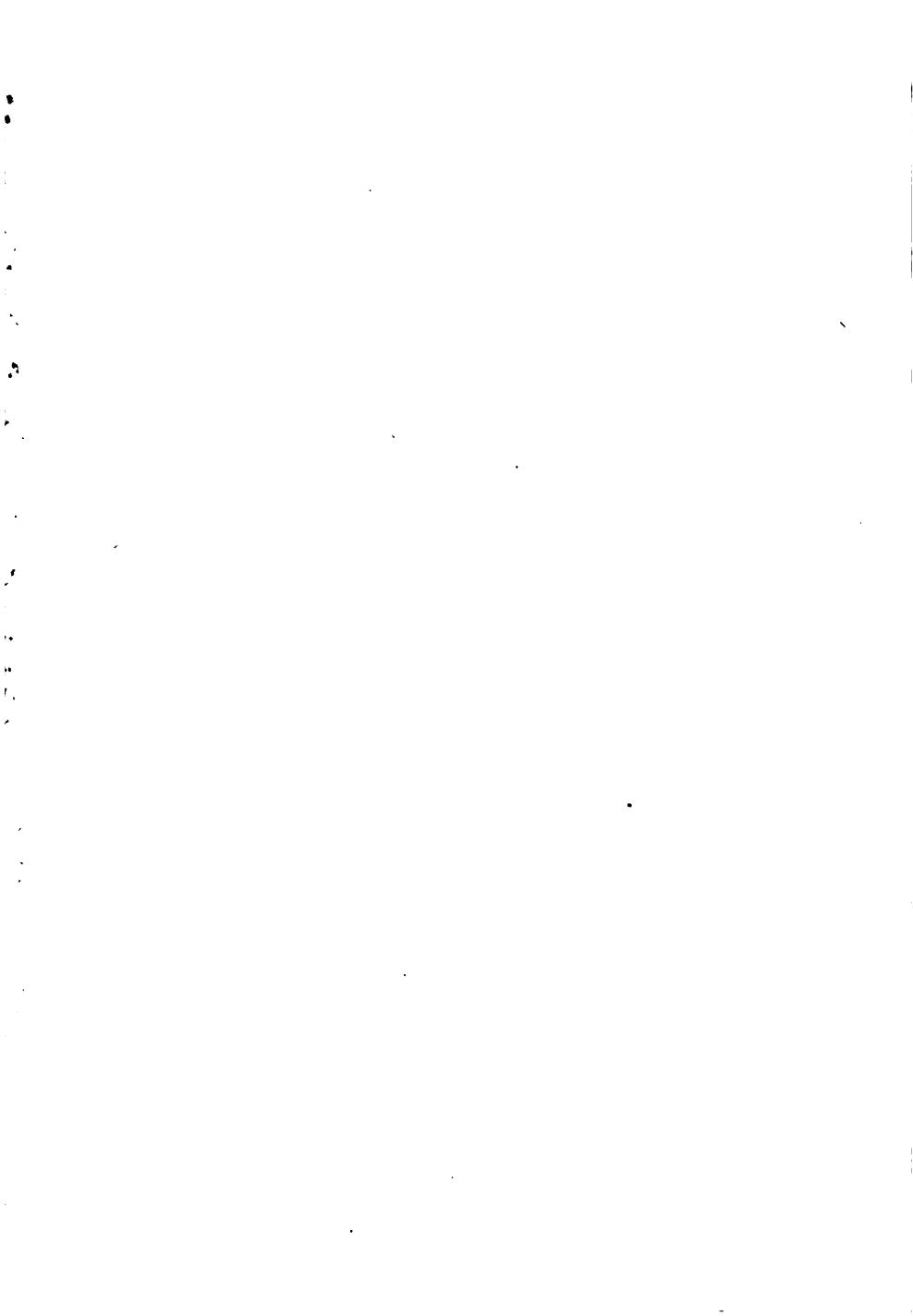
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Life's grey illusion, and essays to light  
The hopeless highways through the realms of  
Death.

And then with face uplifted, that his eyes  
Might seek her own eyes' solace, he had told  
His love for her, and how, as in a net  
The tangled bird may flutter, now his heart  
Was caught for ever by that guileless charm  
With which the gods had graced her. He was  
one

Who lived for action; and his speech was bare  
As winter's dreamless branches; but a sheen  
Encircled him that evening, and his words  
Seem'd golden like the heart-song of a bird  
That sings its joyous message in the sun.  
And he had won her, though the moon was gone  
Before, all lily-like, she droop'd to him  
And kiss'd his forehead, saying she was his;  
And kiss'd again, as if she knew that now  
The gods would eye them through unkindly lids  
And wreck the flimsy fabric of their dream.  
For they that sit in judgment love us not  
Who dwell in Time, imprison'd, till we seek  
The silence and the shadow. From their seats  
They watch our vain endeavor, hear our sighs,  
And note the eager groping of our hands  
To hands that tremble uswards; through the  
dusk





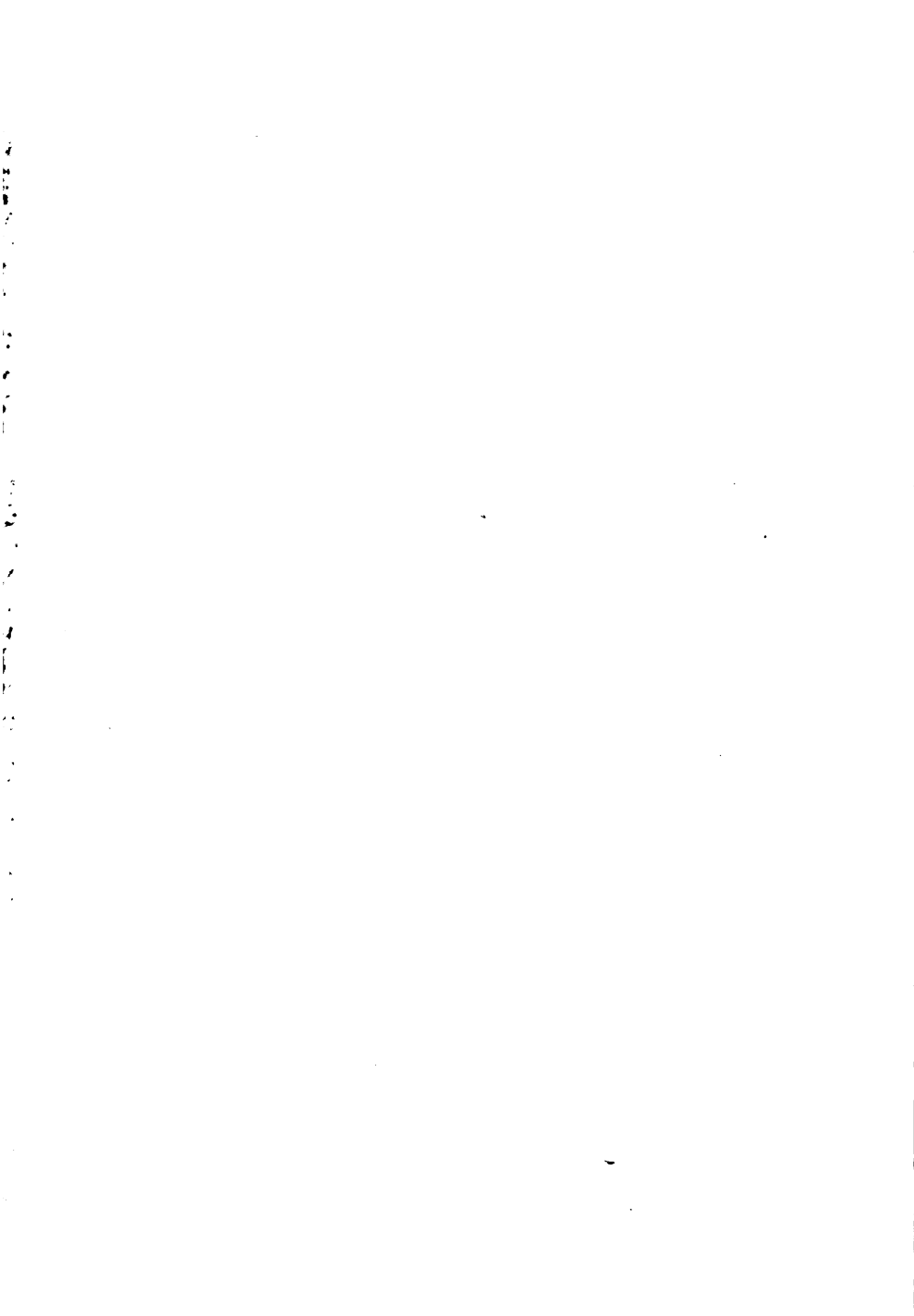
## IDAS AND MARPESSA

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Our whispers rise and vanish, and they hear,  
And hollow laughter thins the lips of them.  
For human loves are holy; our desire  
Outflames their awful splendor; and although  
They scorn us, who are hostages of Death,  
They envy us, and hate us for our dreams.

And so the while they linger'd in the woods,  
And Idas bade her whisper, to her love  
Marpessa told that story. And it seem'd  
Each time he heard it, it was ever new,  
Or, like a jewel held against the sun,  
Took unknown beauties to it. Through the  
trees

Serenity beheld them, marvelling,  
As Nature ever marvels at the fair,  
At so much happiness in two so fond,  
In two so pure and perfect. To the trees  
They seem'd akin, and to the wind-swept hills  
Array'd in joyous colors; to the birds,  
Singing from hearts so cramm'd with happiness  
They never can outpour it, they were things  
Half unsubstantial, with the tiny blooms  
That smiled their stilly message of delight.  
And when her voice was silent, and the tale  
Was ended, he would question: "Even now  
I know not how I won thee, I, whose arms



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

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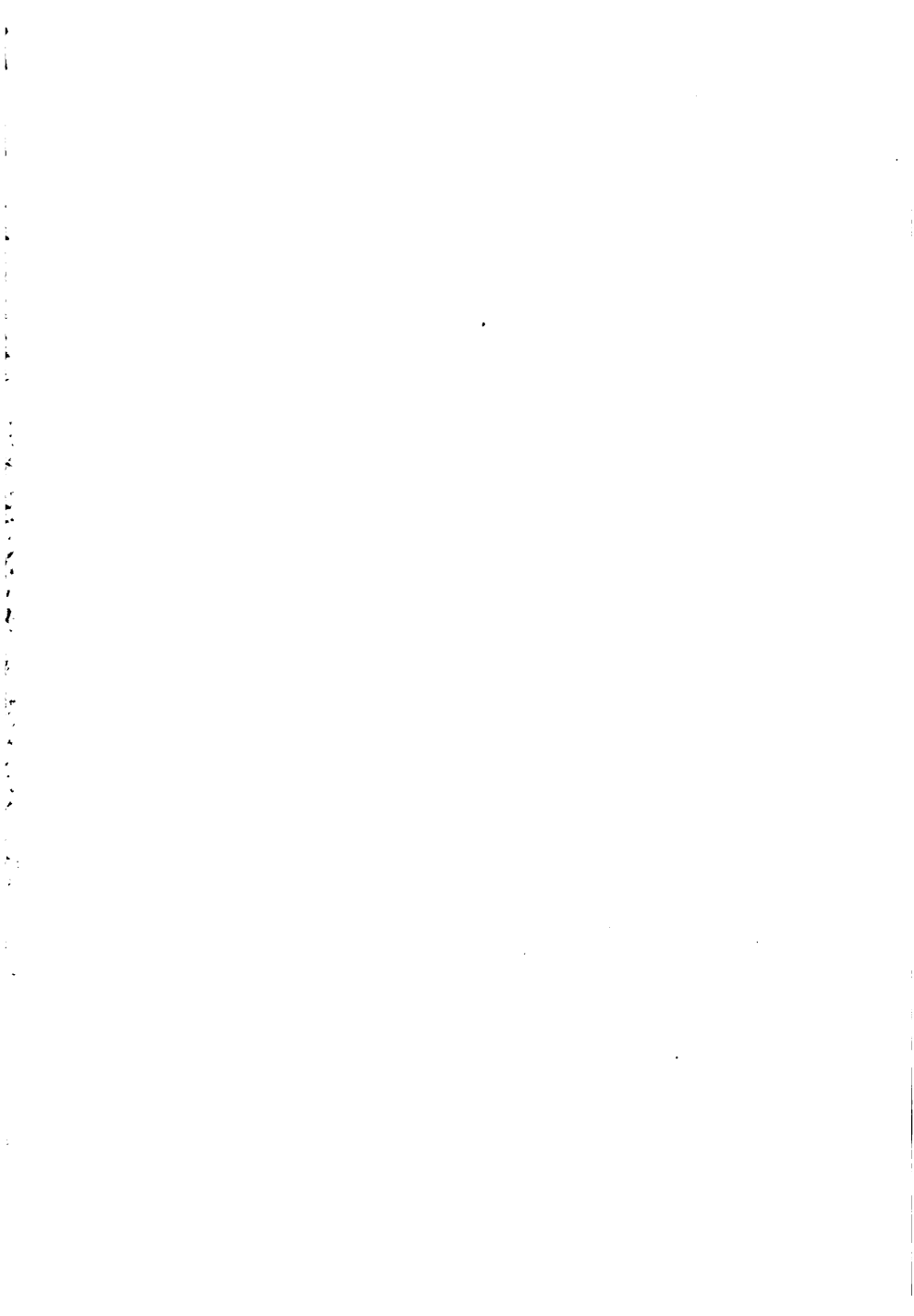
Have fear'd to clasp thy beauty." And she  
smiled

And bade him wonder. "While I live," she  
said,

"My love must needs be silent. When I die  
I'll whisper thee its secret, and thy heart  
Shall strain against the barriers of death  
To bring me solace." And he bent to her,  
And said: "I love thee, and would e'er abide  
Within the folded pinions of thy soul,  
At peace and happy. If thou ventur'est  
Where ghosts await us ere I go with thee,  
Thy love shall draw me thither; should I go,  
I'll wait thy boat's still beaching, and assuage  
Thy murmurs with the welcome of mine eyes."  
"My love thou art," she whisper'd. "I am  
thine.

Our day is at its morning; music fills  
Our happy hearts as now the air is fill'd  
With yon gay bird's impassion'd melody.  
The noon shall follow with its sense of peace,  
Then blessed evening with its memories  
And all the sweet companionship of stars.  
I gaze untroubled down the aisle of Time,  
Because thy love shall guard me." Then he  
kiss'd

The hand that touch'd all-tenderly his hair.  
"I only know I love thee," he replied.



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

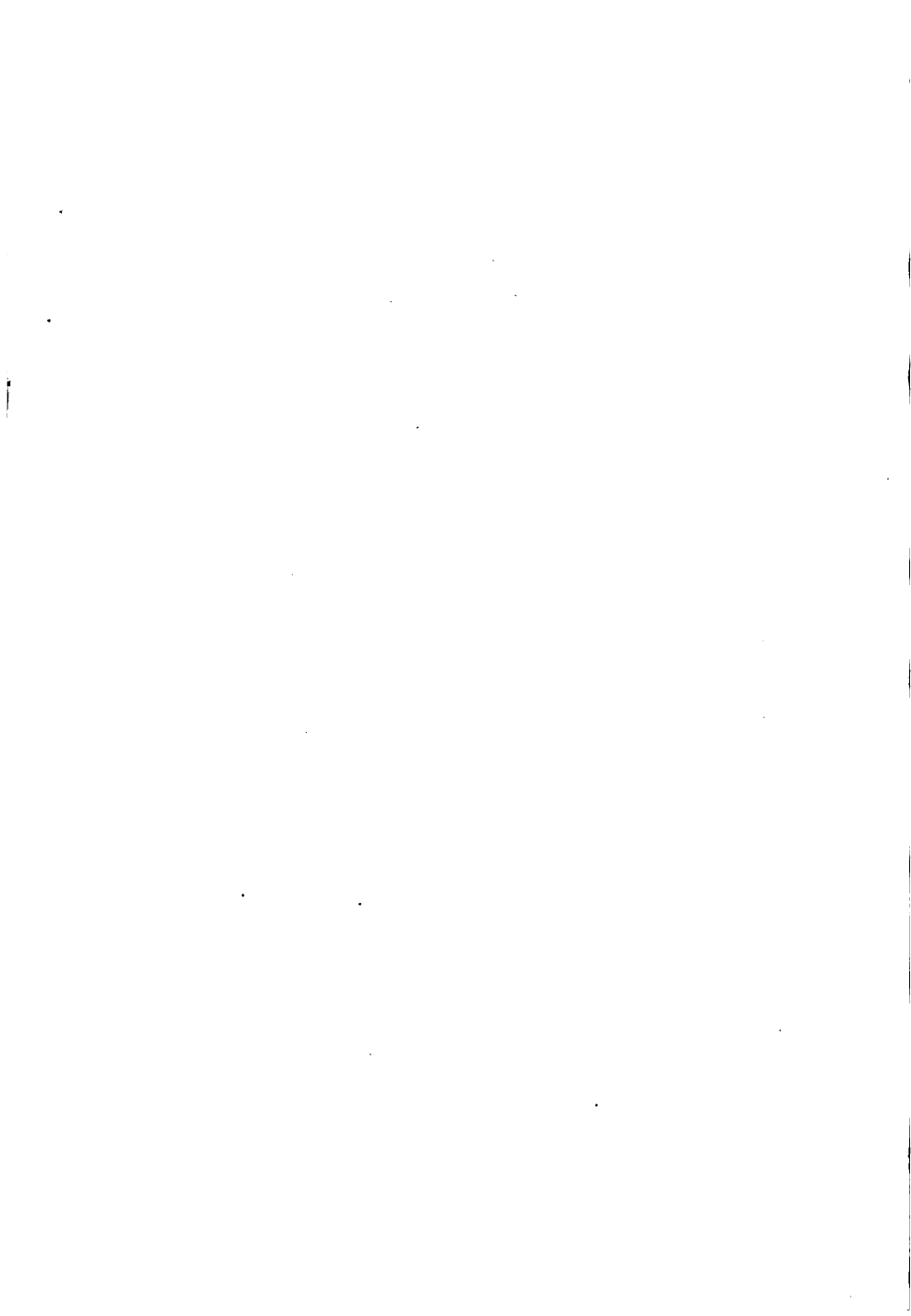
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"Thy words are music; let my silence be  
The air that would contain them. Hark! a  
bird

Has pity on my dumbness, and to thee  
Would sing the benediction in my heart."  
And then they listen'd, and the woods became  
Their temple, and the bird its feather'd priest  
Whose wholesome adoration pleased the gods.  
Then Idas press'd his dear one close to him.  
"It loves," he said. "It loves, and therefore  
sings.

But though I love, my worship must be mute,  
My fond Marpessa, my beloved wife."  
And then, perhaps, she raised to his her lips  
And saw, with closèd eyes, the olden dream  
In all its purity. Oh! never say  
That love is aught but holy. From the dark  
We journey to the darkness; love, the while,  
Enswathes us in its utter spotlessness  
And makes of poor, imperfect instruments  
Things worth the What's-to-follow. Love is all.

For two swift years the gods look'd carelessly  
On Idas and Marpessa. There were wars  
'Twixt god and god, intrigues and jealousies  
To hold their bright attention; otherwheres  
Kings robed in purple, wearing crowns of gold,  
Look'd at the stars perhaps too haughtily,



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Or plann'd To-morrow's conquest; them the  
    gods

Smote silently and swiftly, laughing long  
To see the pomp that follow'd them to death,  
As if they thought their banners or their plumes  
Might alter Death's enorme solemnity,  
Or hint: These once were kings. For two swift  
    years

Those lovers, now long silent, dream'd their  
    dreams.

They laugh'd together in the morning's cool  
And raised their babes. And then the gods  
    look'd down

And saw their fondness, and an arch'd surprise  
Above their heavy eyes bode ill to them.



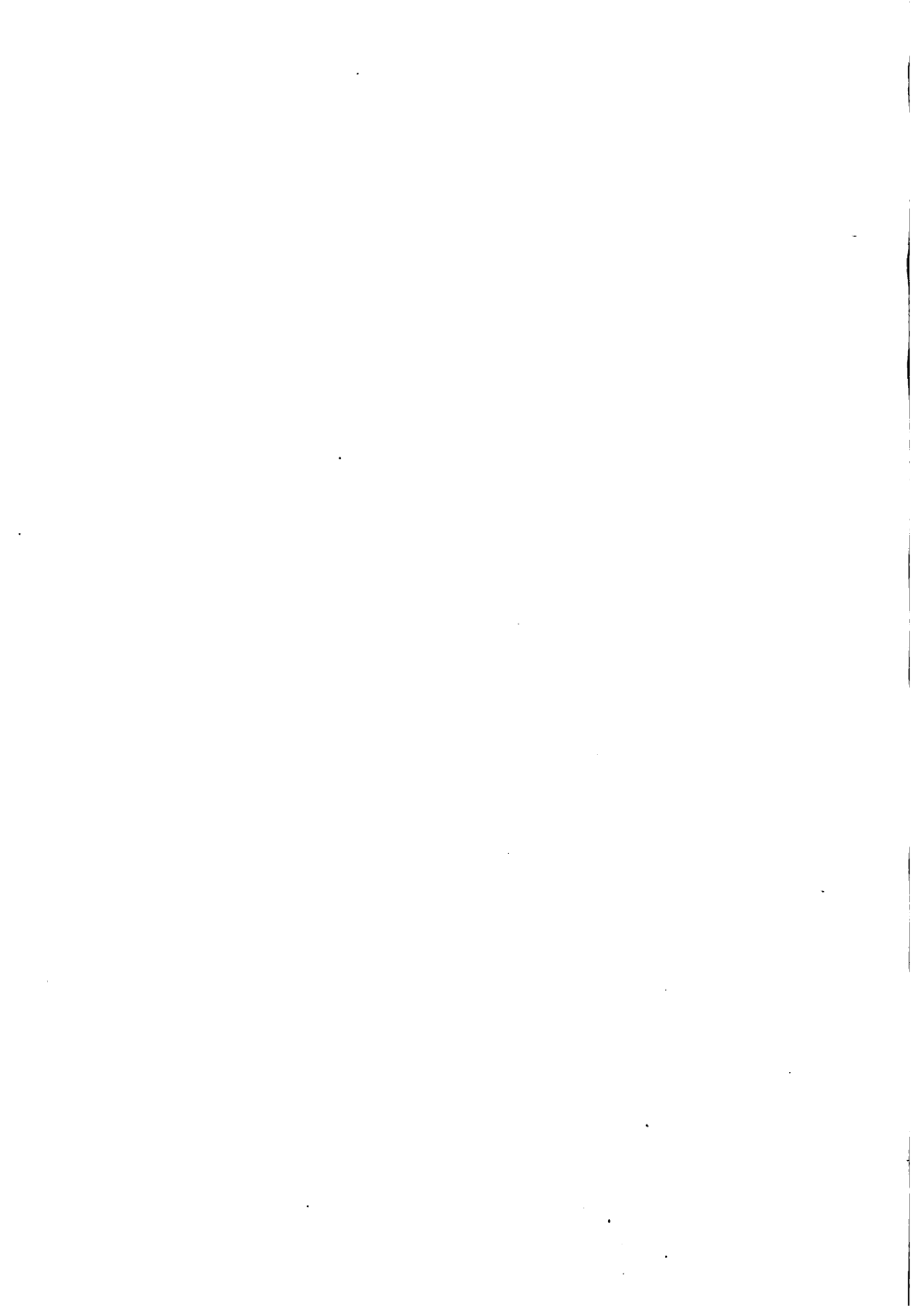
S when great birds, white-plumaged, in  
    the foam

Of untrack'd seas from drowsiness  
    awake,

And make the bright air brighter with the flash  
Of light-tipp'd wings, so now the shining  
    heavens

Wherein the gods gleam'd idly, seem'd awake  
As, one by splendid one, they roused themselves.





## IDAS AND MARPESSA

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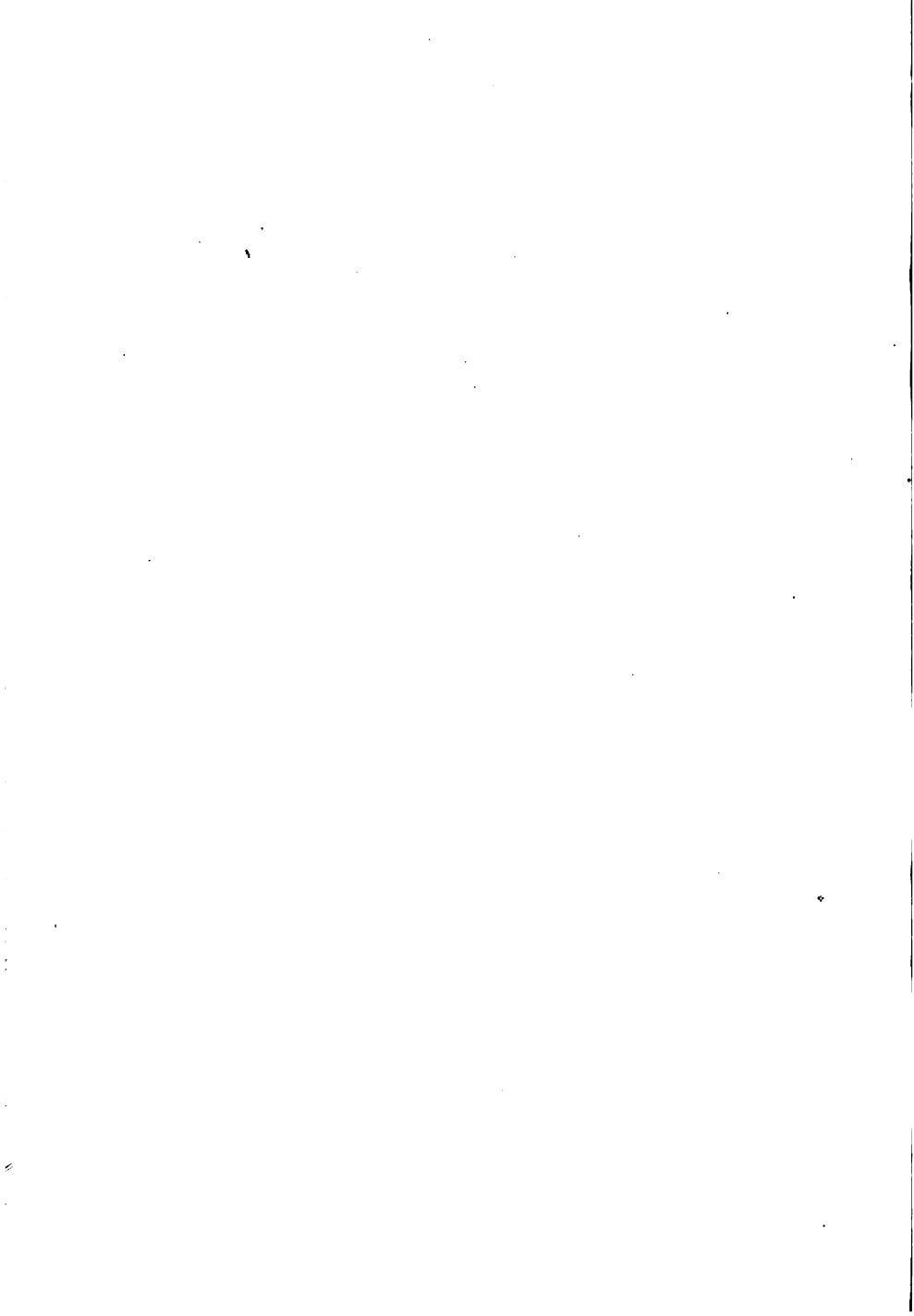
Then moved among them a delightful boy,  
The star-eyed Ganymedes, loved of Zeus,  
Whose rounded limbs the winds kiss'd joyously  
The while he slumber'd; in his hand he bore  
A crystal goblet topp'd with fragrant foam,  
And touch'd each snowy shoulder. And the  
    gods

Were glad to see his pretty artlessness  
So drank and laugh'd, and, laughing, drank  
    again.

And then on golden platters, finely wrought,  
Most rich in pictures of heroic deeds  
And loves now sung by singers and the stars,  
The curl-brow'd boy to each reclining god  
Took honey-sweet ambrosia, and they ate,  
And thus renew'd their youth. And being fill'd  
They look'd again to where the fair earth  
    gleam'd

As gleams a crystal river when the sun  
Pours its hot love upon it. Saying naught  
They gazed thereon in silence, much as we  
May watch the thing from which still Beauty's  
    breath

Has blown the grossness, idly wondering  
Why Zeus had made a toy so beautiful.  
Swiftly they saw with their all-seeing eyes  
The mountains' majesty, the charm of vales,  
The drowsy forest's beauty; from the woods



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

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Their gaze turn'd slowly to the silv'ry streams  
That wound through gay and flower-enamell'd  
          meads

And laugh'd while Death allur'd them to the sea.  
They saw the city with its hordes of men  
As blind and selfish as their sons to-day;  
Amassing wealth beyond the needs of them,  
Disputing vainly in their ignorance  
Of things as far beyond them as the stars.  
They laugh'd to see the soldier's martial stride,  
The condescension of the sated lord,  
Who smiled on worth and frown'd on poverty  
While Death stood silently beside his seat  
And eyed him with grave patience. In their  
          hearts

They mock'd man's pride, and wish'd him bitter-  
          ness.

They saw the hardy peasant at his task  
Behind his straining oxen; on the hills  
The piping boy with brown'd and sturdy limbs  
Beside his sheep; and where the rocking sea  
Responded to the wooing of the sun,  
And gleam'd its pleasure, bearded fishermen  
Whose eyes roved landward where their loved  
          ones were.

They saw the priests perform the sacrifice  
On ancient altars hewn from gleaming stone,



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

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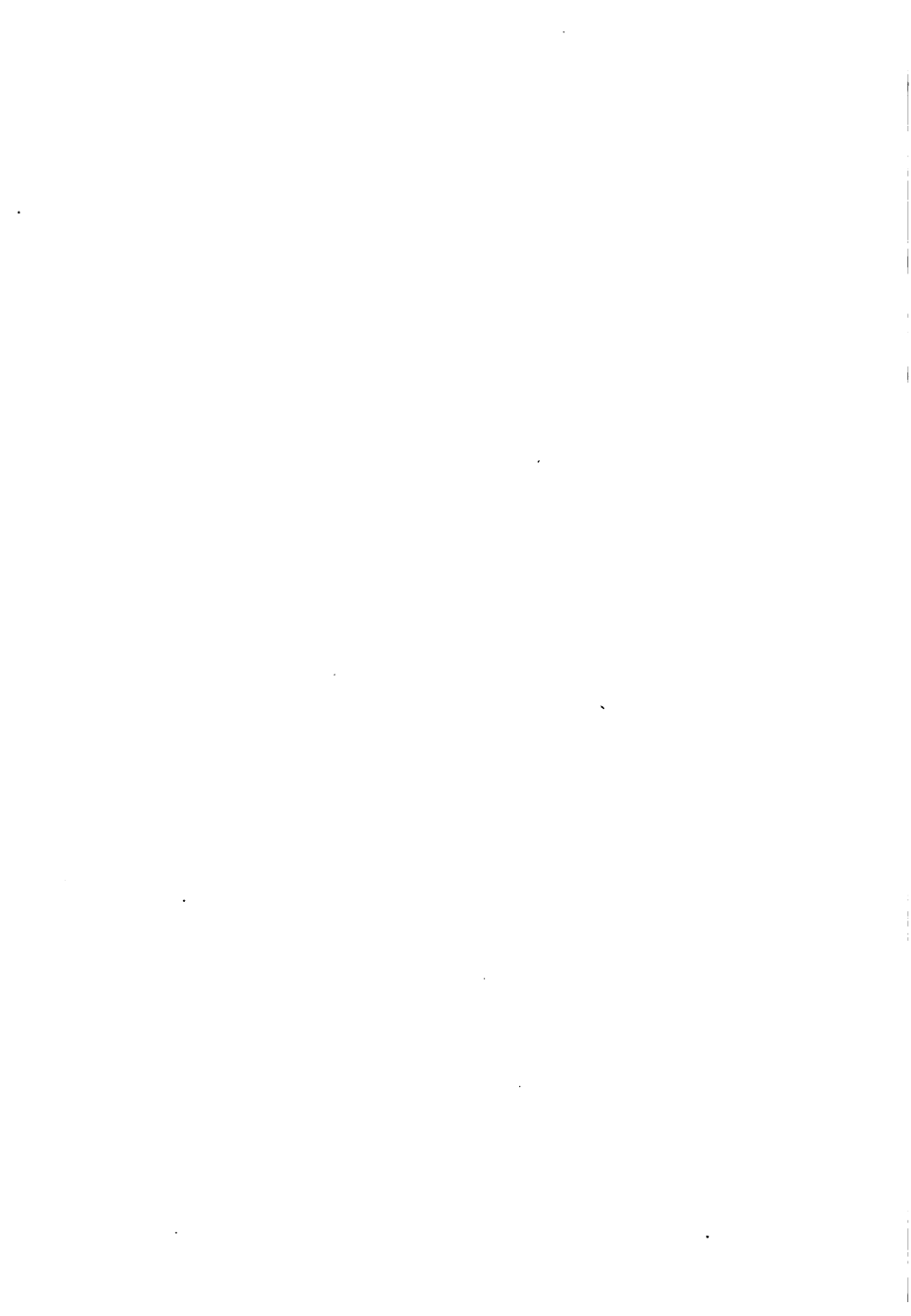
While white-robed vestals watch'd the sacred  
flames

And sang the solemn pæans; in the fields  
They saw the women bent above the grapes.  
The tranquil kine amused them, for they thought  
Of restless Io's heavy punishment;  
And when a deer would raise its antler'd head,  
Or the meek rabbit signal its affright  
With lifted ears alert to every sound,  
Their bright eyes widen'd as they hoped to see  
A shepherd's wooing of a willing nymph.  
And loud they laugh'd to hear what vows he  
made

Of lasting faith, or swore to cherish her  
Despite her fault; for well the wise gods knew  
The bees are fond while flowers are yet to  
win.

But soon forget the flower that is despoil'd.

Apart from all the rest, Apollo sat,  
But eyed the earth as idly. In his hair  
Such glory linger'd that his face was bright  
As is the sun itself, and yet his eyes  
Were blacker than the gloom of wintry skies  
Ere stars adventure from their hiding place.  
One hand lay heavy on his marbled knee  
As, forward bent, his gaze pierced fearlessly  
The gulfs of blue; the other held the lyre



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

With which at times he charm'd his grave com-  
peers

By dream-evoking music, strains as sad  
As Day's bright scorn or Night's sweet con-  
stancy.

But now, though Zeus oft eyed him lovingly  
As if in supplication, at his side  
The lyre was mute; for where the trees enclosed  
A moveless pool on that revolving sphere  
Where dreams are born that Fate may mock at  
them,

He saw—Marpessa. And the joy in him  
Became extinguish'd like a blown out light  
Because, all-suddenly, he longed for her,  
Who seemed a thing of whitest ivory  
Within an em'rald casket; like a flame  
His joy leap'd up and suddenly went out  
And left his huge heart empty, as to-day  
Our little joy as suddenly is gone  
As is the fragrance of the fated rose.  
But heedless of the ever-burning gaze  
That flamed above her movements, in the pool  
Marpessa bathed, her black hair having bound  
About her brows all-tightly. By the reeds  
Her garments lay, and though they snowy were  
Yet she was whiter, for her purity  
Herself was, as its pallor is the moon,  
And though a wife yet was she innocent.





## IDAS AND MARPESSA

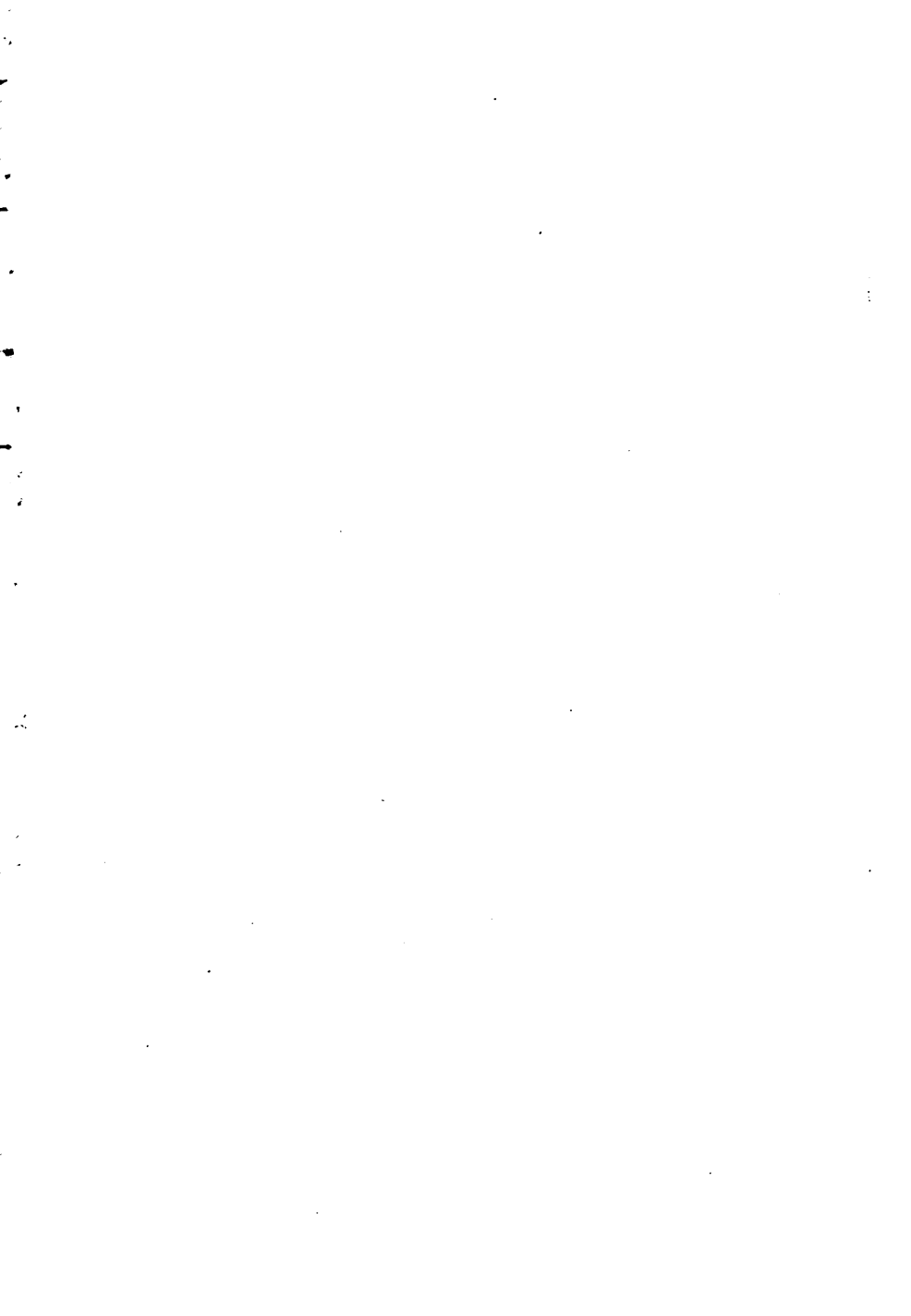
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The pretty deer, with large and lustrous eyes  
And hesitating hoofs, came from the trees  
And nosed the glinting water, eyeing her  
As though she were a thing of woods and hills,  
A thing that knew and loved them; and anon,  
When they had sensed the loveliness of her  
And sipp'd their fill, they turn'd their heads  
from her

And shyly sought the forest's shade again.  
The birds, attired in brilliant liveries,  
Consider'd her a sister, look'd at her,  
And sang while looking; then, with wetted wings,  
Flew to their mates and woke the scented  
peace

With twitter'd gossip, till these others sought  
The little pool that held the wonder-one.  
Then, as he gazed, their swiftly-moving wings  
Seem'd brighter to Apollo than the skies  
When sunset tints them; and he envied them  
Their fondness for Marpessa. From his seat  
He tower'd suddenly, as does the flame  
The winds have tortured; and had sought her  
then,

While yet his heart's Titanic hammering  
Paled his bright face. But Zeus, the Father,  
call'd,  
And set him to a task that hinder'd him.



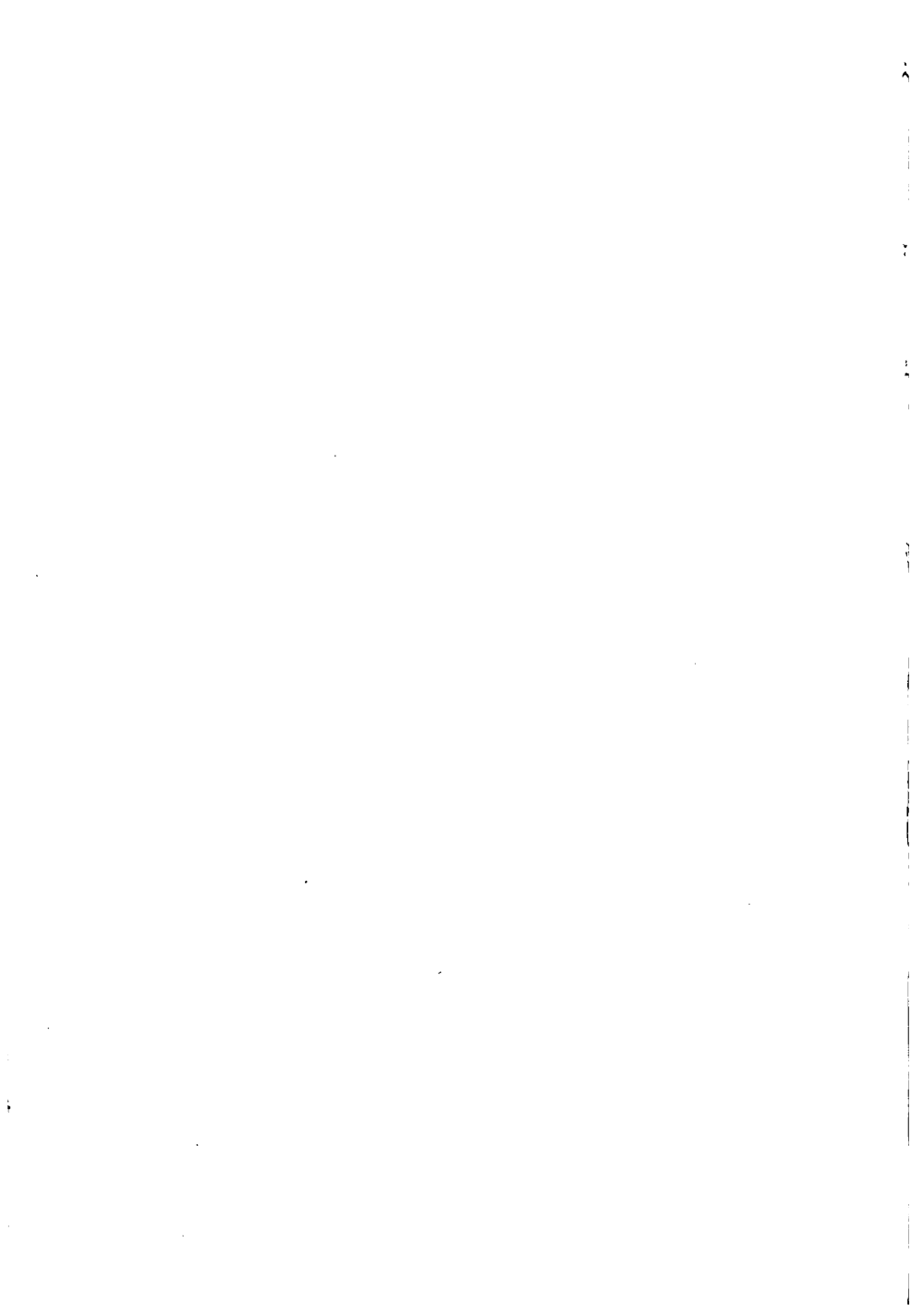
## IDAS AND MARPESSA

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And once again, that same task being done,  
He peer'd from out the shelter of a cloud  
And saw Marpessa. It was even now,  
And they that mock the destinies of men  
Sat solemnly together, knee by knee,  
Beneath grave Zeus and his all-jealous spouse.  
And while they whisper'd of the day to come  
The sad-eyed Dusk, with dreams in either hand,  
Stepp'd from their midst and sought the weary  
earth.

Before the gentle sorrow of her face  
The light withdrew, to men whom Sleep still  
bless'd

Bearing the day's illusion, and the hope  
For that which, being granted, proves but vain.  
And while he gazed upon the half-hush'd woods,  
Where now the trees in blessèd stillness  
Exhaled their souls, all-grateful for the day,  
From out their gardens to the greater peace  
Marpessa came, and Idas. Lover-like,  
His arm was still about her; and again  
He charm'd her with the story of their love  
In days that now seem'd days of golden dream.  
And though so oft the story he had told,  
Yet seem'd it ever new. In wonderment  
She walk'd beside him, raising trustingly  
Her eyes to his when he a deed recall'd  
That brought the Past back, and its memories.



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

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Above their heads, where arched the heavy  
boughs,

The birds cheep'd faintly, knowing that the  
night

Was drawing nigh, and soon the hateful owl  
Would hoot its feud against all feather'd things  
And furry creatures, while the heartless moon  
Cross'd regally the heavens. Amid the leaves  
In blest security they hid their heads  
Beneath their wings, and then the woods were  
still

As if with expectation. And the while  
The darkness thicken'd, by a well-known path  
The lovers sought a bower beloved of them,  
And whisper'd there, as if the birds might hear,  
About their love that still so wondrous seem'd.  
Forgetting naught they lived their dream  
again—

Their first sweet stammer'd vows; her first shy  
kiss

When, so it seem'd, the gods had turn'd aside  
In envy of a girl's pure tenderness;  
The silence that was music; and the calm  
That slowly flamed to passion—Ah! if thou  
Whose lids now droop above this halting line  
Hast loved as they loved, but thy mem'ry paint  
That perfect picture for thee. Having loved  
Thou knowest all things perfect; one thou art



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

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With Idas or Marpessa. Kingdoms change,  
Stars wane and mountains vanish; love alone  
Remains To-day what Yesterday it was,  
And makes us kin to all that 's turn'd to dust.

And while the Night enswathed the sleeping  
earth,

Asserting its dominion over men  
Whose hearts were joyous, men whose hearts  
were sad,

Where dream'd the gods, the ever-deathless ones,  
It darken'd too. Each splendid star now faced  
Its sister orb in silv'ry sympathy  
And left the high air widow'd; but there glow'd,  
Where sat the gods, a steely after light  
In luminous suggestion, such as woos  
The crystal fringes of the rolling sphere  
Where white-furr'd bear tread heavily the snow.  
The winds stroked rhymeless music from their  
harps,

Intoning solemnly their airy chant  
In praise of Zeus. "Supremest! Thunderer!  
Whose glance is as the lightning; thou whose  
breath

Titanic cedars bends submissively,  
Heaps sea on sea, extinguishes the stars!  
Gather'd from far we kneel and worship thee  
In wild, unfetter'd music. We have seen





## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Man's pitiful endeavors, deeds and dreams  
Beneath thy notice. Death makes mock of  
them,

Whose little life is spent ere thou and thine  
Are conscious of their being. Thee we praise,  
Who art alone enduring; by whose will  
We wake from nothing, by whose will we die."  
But Zeus, with sad impenetrable eyes,  
Gazed into space, well-knowing that at last  
Creator and created are as one—  
Are doom'd as is the sunset's holy glow,  
Are vain as are the hopes of yesterday.  
And then the gods that sat at Zeus's feet  
With half-hush'd voices answer'd: "Thou art he  
Whose eyes have dream'd all things of consequence.

Before it came, thou knewest of To-day  
And Destiny's decrees. We bend to thee  
Who art the Father." And again the winds  
Intoned their praise: "Thou only can'st out-  
stare

The eyes of Time. Death lays no hands on  
thee;

But crams his grey and echoless abode  
With all that thou createst. Thou art he  
To whom they wildly clamor ere they tread  
The way that leads to silence and despair."  
Then once again the gods' deep murmurs voiced



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

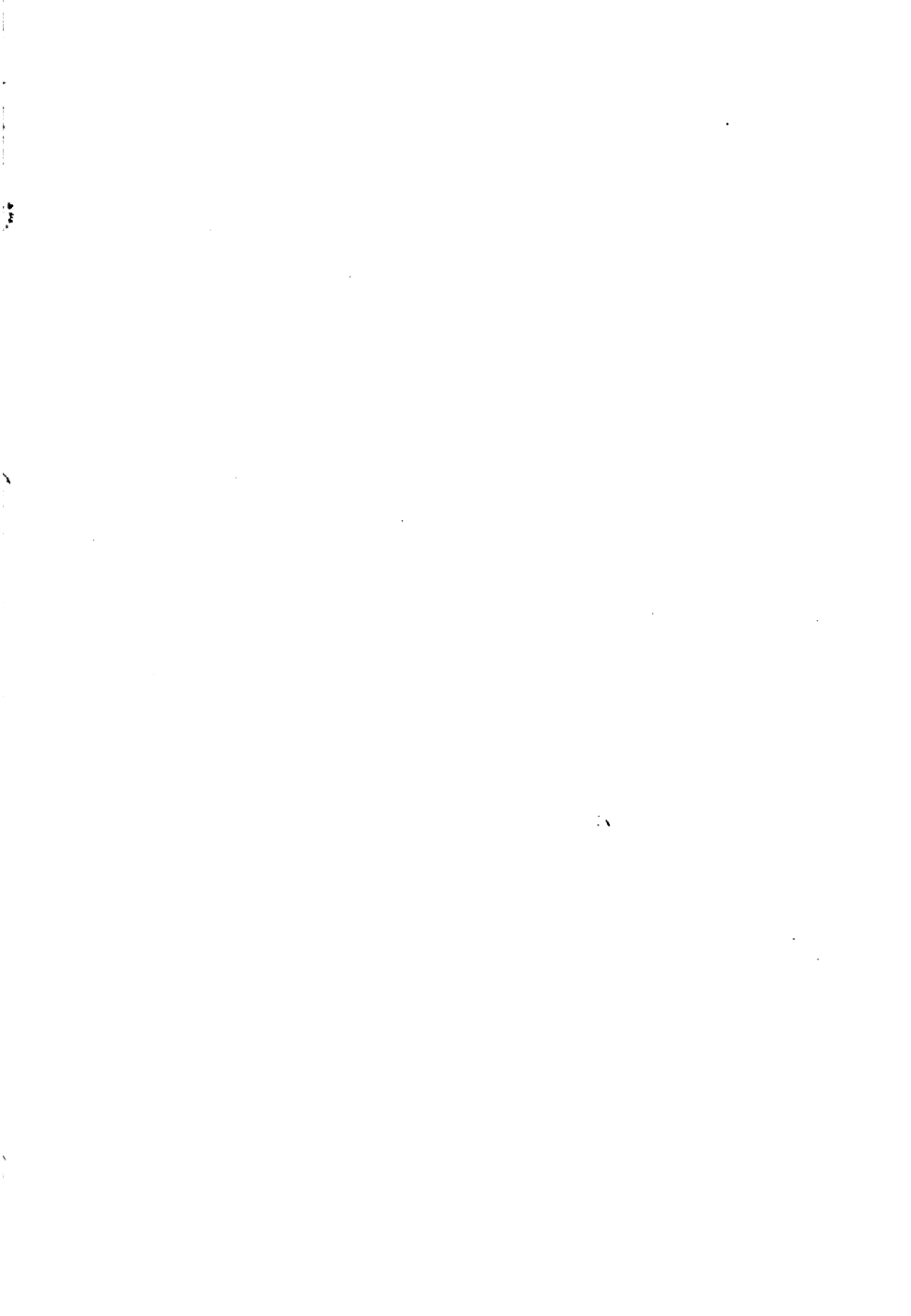
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Their answe'ring adoration; but the eyes  
Of Zeus were fix'd and moody. So the rock,  
Unmindful of the passion of the sea,  
Awaits its end; it scorns the sun's caress,  
The wind's advances and the lightning's hate.

And now the heights were silent. Cloud on  
cloud,

With fleecy shoulders leaning each to each,  
Took for the night their stations, while the winds  
Remain'd without and roam'd, disconsolate,  
The starry highways. One by splendid one  
The gods lay down to wait Aurora's call  
To see the dawnburst, note with ecstasy  
The modest flower's unfolding, and delight  
In that first note with which the happy bird  
Heralds the day and all its promises.  
Austerely silent, at the feet of Zeus  
They fell asleep, or gazed through half-closed  
eyes

Upon the face that tower'd over them.  
And once again, like huge and brooding birds,  
The watchers of the tragedies of men  
Lay couch'd amid the cloud-mass stillily;  
Prepared to dream of flights against the sun,  
Enormous circlings to the pleasant earth  
Or swift descents through endless gulfs of space.  
But one was wakeful, one who lay apart



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

And strove to pierce with melancholy gaze  
The moveless clouds—Apollo. At his side  
His lyre still idle lay. No breathless tones  
Lured fancies to the eyes of them that slept,  
Or woke the others' musings. By himself  
He lay and suffer'd, anxious for the dawn  
That he might see Marpessa, and, ere night,  
Win her from Idas and the things she loved.



HE morning dawn'd, a morn of joyous-  
ness,

Of blue, bright skies; a morn of wonder-  
ment

So breathless that the ever-trilling lark  
Outsung itself while mounting, flight by flight,  
To where all space seem'd thirsty for its song.  
A first, faint breeze, forerunner of the winds  
That soon would follow, from the caves of pearl  
Where homed the plaintive echoes of the deep  
Came slowly forth, and fill'd the airy aisles  
With sea-sweet fragrance. As the trees awoke  
They trembled slightly, and the whisp'ring  
leaves

Greeted each other in the speech that is  
More delicate than music. Moveless then,



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Like virgins at the hour of sacrifice,  
They stood and waited till with ruder hands  
The winds should touch them, sway them to and  
fro

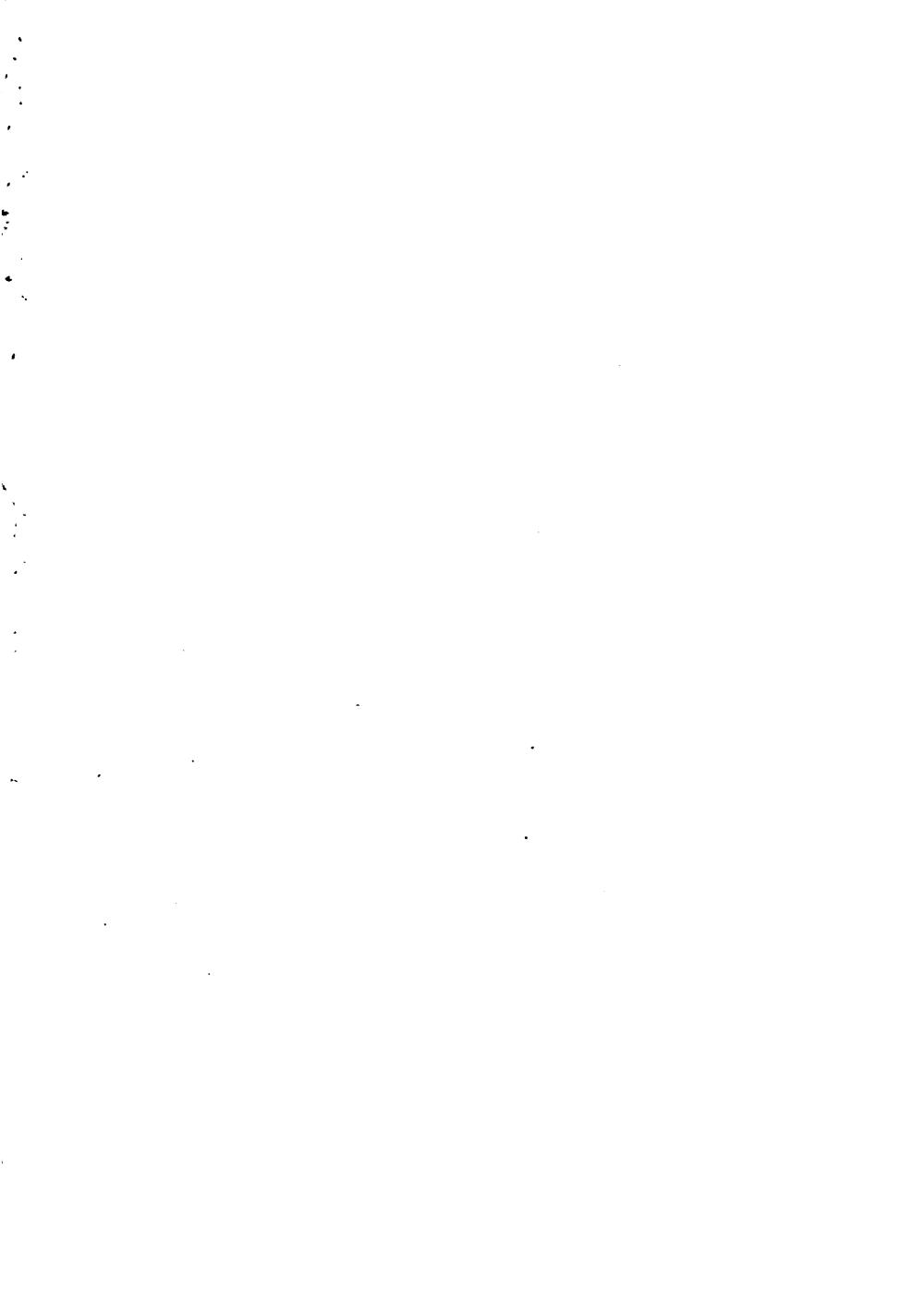
In wildest dance, and leave them suddenly  
To mourn their stripp'd and tatter'd draperies.  
And while a silence still possess'd the air  
Save for the dwindling cadence of the lark,  
To where the steps led downward Idas came  
From out the palace with his shaggy hounds.  
Marpessa follow'd with his trusted spear  
And bow and arrows; but her dragging feet  
And smileless lips betoken'd she was sad  
This golden morning; and had kept him there  
To hear the first sweet prattle of their babes  
Had he not seem'd so eager for the chase.  
But when she laid his weapons at his feet,  
And raised to his the question of her eyes,  
He placed his arm about her, and his touch  
Made her forget, who was so solely his.

"Nay, fear not, wife," he said. "Ere noon is  
come

The hounds shall bay before the welcome gates,  
And call thee forth to greet me. Thou shalt  
see

My shoulders hid beneath the hugest skin  
That made a bear seem fearful; but thy feet  
This very night, when o'er thy heavy lids





## IDAS AND MARPESSA

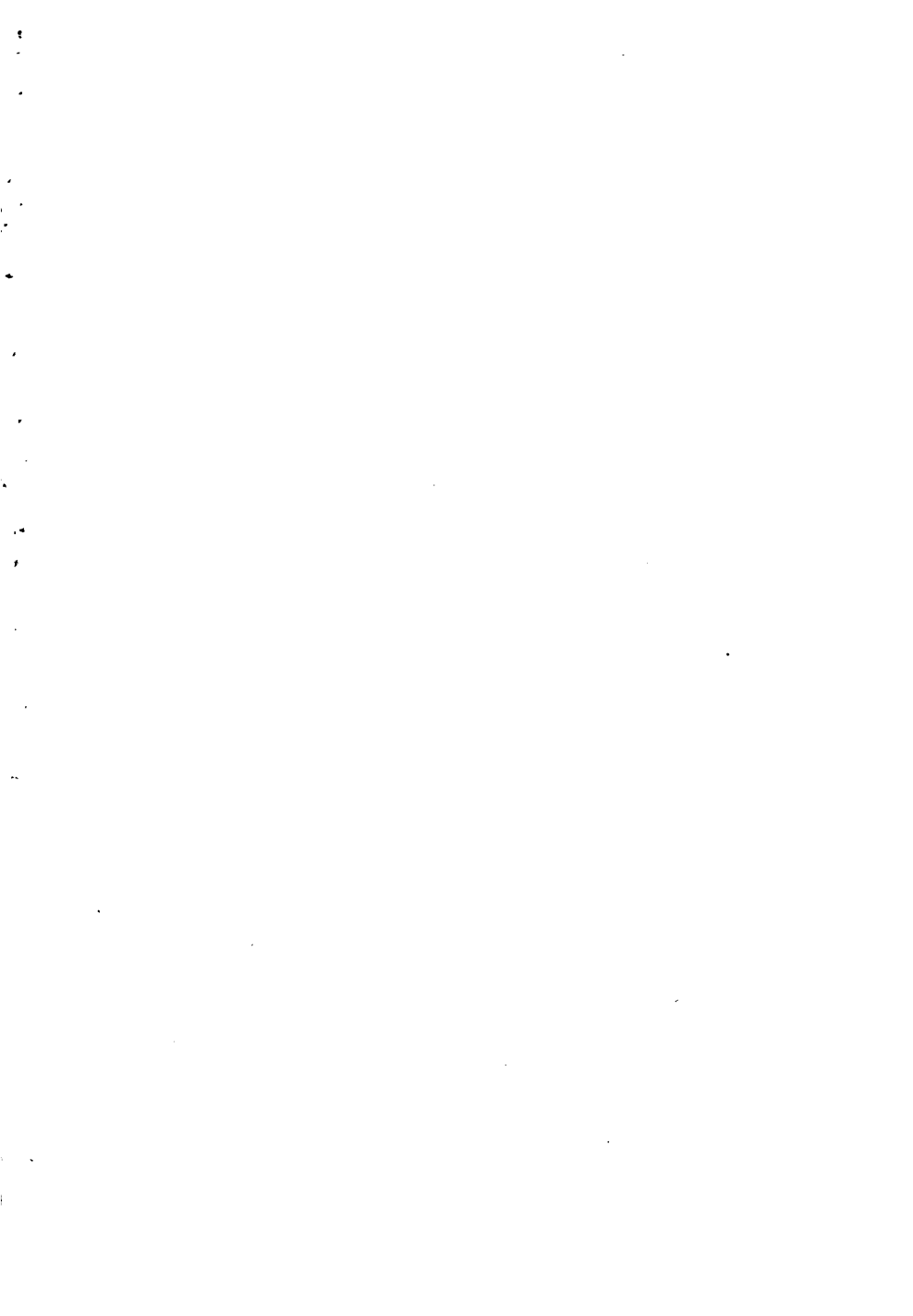
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Sleep draws the velvet solace of his plumes,  
Shall tread it as thou goest to thy couch  
To dream of him who loves thee." "Ah," said  
she,

"Who goes away is ever free of care;  
Who stays is heavy-hearted. Thou and I  
Are one, my husband; when thou leavest me,  
Though the blest sunshine trembles in my hair,  
My heart becomes the darksome lair of fear.  
I love thee, Idas." "And I love thee, too,"  
Her husband answer'd. "I have thought of  
thee

When, call'd in Greece's service, I have dared  
The swift, unerring dart of bitter Death.  
Thy love has kept me scathless, and thy voice  
Has whisper'd me in hours of loneliness  
Such words as gave me courage. I have lived  
Since first I loved thee; and I love thee still,  
And fain would live to win for thee and mine  
Fresh honor and more glory. When I go  
To fight for Greece, thou sayest not a word;  
Yet now I go to bring thee——" Then he  
laugh'd

And stroked the worry from her low, cool brow,  
Then bade her note how eager were the hounds  
To prove their mettle. And she clung to him  
And look'd at him in silence. Ah! who knows  
The thoughts behind a woman's trustful eyes,



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Or senses all she suffers? Through the years  
We take without a question all she gives,  
But never know her. Infancy and age  
Alike depend upon her; in his prime  
Man strides alone to learn his destiny;  
He crowns himself whenever he succeeds,  
But turns to her for comfort when he fails.  
So Idas laugh'd and kiss'd her. "Smile on me,"  
He said at last, his weapons in his hand;  
"That when I venture where the woods are dark  
Thine eyes shall light me, and the memory  
Of thy sweet face may hearten me against  
What odds may wait me in the monster's cave."  
And while the eager dogs leap'd noisily,  
Or whined with noses pointed to the woods,  
She kiss'd his forehead; and he strode away,  
The dogs beside him watchful of his eye  
And silent now as he was. And while yet  
Marpessa's hands were clasp'd against her heart,  
He pass'd within the menace of the woods.

And while her darlings slept, two pretty babes,  
All pink and white and smiles and innocence,  
To that same pool beyond the garden's walls  
Marpessa went, unfearing. Now the woods  
Were bright with promise, for the tallest trees  
Beheld the first swift lances of the sun  
Glint in the east, and drive in front of them



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

The last doom'd line of hesitating grey.  
But still the grass, from which her sandals  
brush'd

Uncounted dewdrops mirroring the world,  
Was cool in shadow, and the leaves were wet  
As if the fleeing Night had wept o'er them.  
And while she sped beneath the whisp'ring trees,  
From glade to glade where now the startled hare  
Look'd hurriedly upon her, and was gone,  
She thought of Idas. Was it years ago  
He woo'd and won her? Or but yesternorn  
She said she loved him? For it seem'd her love  
Was like the light, the golden light of day,  
That grew each moment stronger; scarce she  
knew

How much she loved him. Ah! the gentle trees  
That bent above the soil in sympathy  
Would know her grief; and so she raised to  
them

Her pleading hands; and though they silent  
were,

She sensed their pity and was comforted.  
But ere she came to where the shaded pool  
Invited with its stillness, in her path  
Stood one so splendid that the sun itself  
Could make his face no brighter. Curling locks,  
That gleam'd above a forehead marble-pale,  
Caught the descending glory, but his eyes



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Were dark with mystery, black yet terrible  
As passion is, that hungers for the thing  
Beyond the fever'd reaching of its hand.  
But though his face was flame, the form of him  
So perfect was, so chastely wonderful,  
That, awed to silence and astonishment,  
Marpessa eyed him as a moment's dream,  
Half-fearing he might vanish. Then a smile  
Caress'd his lips, a smile so luminous  
That now an added glory dower'd him  
And made him light itself—light radiant  
In, of all human forms, the form most beautiful.  
Now, seeing he had charm'd her, as the flame  
Ensnares the soft-wing'd priestess of the dark,  
He spoke. "Marpessa!" Just the name of  
her.

But, oh! his voice was as the voice of one  
Who deems his love for evermore removed  
Beyond the bridgeless gulfs of hopeless death,  
Beyond all winning. As the echoes died  
The silence seem'd suggestive of a woe,  
So heavily it lay upon the soul  
Of her that listen'd. And the hand of her,  
While still she faced him with untroubled eyes,  
Was slowly lifted to her drooping lips  
As if in question. But, before she spoke,  
Again Apollo cried that airy name,  
Again it echo'd till the glade was fill'd.





## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

“Marpessa!” Oh! the tenderness of it.  
And then he held his hand outstretch’d to her  
And look’d his longing; but as yet she thought  
She dream’d by daylight, and the thing would  
pass

As all dreams pass, however beautiful.  
And still his beauty charm’d her, and, anon,  
The air contain’d her hesitating hand  
And heard her whisper: “Art thou Love itself,  
Or Beauty’s spirit? Or art thou a man,  
And made of that same perishable stuff  
That waits for death to ease it of its pain?  
Or do I dream and think thou gleamest there,  
While naught’s around me save the list’ning  
trees

And shifting sunlight? If a man thou art,  
Whence comest thou? What hero-bearing land  
May claim thy service, and what mother’s eyes  
Have joy’d above thy beauty?” Then in tones  
That thrill’d at times the purest silences  
Of highest heaven, Apollo answer’d her:  
“Man am I not, nor subject unto death;  
But number’d am with those whose gaze serene  
Watches the world from heights of amethyst  
Where sits my father. I am he that hymns  
The song of morning, and, when even’s torch  
Reddens the west, I sing the requiem  
That mourns the sun’s down-going. I am he



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

To whom the Muses listen, and the stars  
Echo the songs that tremble from my lips.  
My mother was Latona." While he spoke,  
A startled cry escaped Marpessa's lips  
As, fearing now his presence, she essay'd  
To ease her eyes in darkness with her hand.  
And still was silent. "Now thou knowest me,"  
The god continued, and his voice was soft  
As that of waves on sands of drowsy isles.  
"On sapphire morns of golden joyousness  
Thy lips have sung my praises; thou hast seen  
The curling incense widen in its rise  
To circle me with fragrance. Drop thy hands  
That I may see the beauty of thine eyes,  
O fair Marpessa!" Then she look'd at him,  
Unconscious of his purpose. "Brightest god,"  
She whisper'd faintly as she lean'd to him;  
"Thou callest me Marpessa. What am I  
That thou, in accents sweeter than the wind  
On eves of pearl, should'st call me by my name?  
I am but mortal, and no more to thee  
Than the doom'd flower that perishes with day."  
And then he open'd wide his gleaming arms  
And look'd at her, as he had often look'd  
On other beauties willing to be won;  
And once again the forest heard him sigh:  
"Marpessa! fair Marpessa!" Then at last



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

She sensed his love, and straightway shrank  
from him

As from a thing unclean and dangerous.

But he continued with a swifter speech

To tell his passion. "Ah! thou knowest now

Why thus I cry 'Marpessa'! As I gazed

From heaven's bright heights and saw thee, in  
my heart

Love's sudden torch was lighted. Thee I love.

Unearthly splendors woo me when I pass

Those ways serene; the nymphs' white loveliness

Awaits me where the fern nods dreamily

Its acquiescence to the wooing wind.

But thou art fairer than the whitest nymph

That trembles in the moonlight. I have seen

Thy fated beauty, and I yearn for thee

As one in hell may hunger for the light."

But closer now she drew her purple robe

Across her breast. "Thou lovest hopelessly,

O flame-bright god," she said. "My love is his

Who won me from my father, who has spun

His golden dreams about me till to him

I seem as lovely as the brightest star.

Two babes remind us of our mating time,

Of days when yet we whisper'd each to each

The pretty nothings that to lovers are

More dear than all the wisdom of the years.

And now that we are cooler, side by side



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

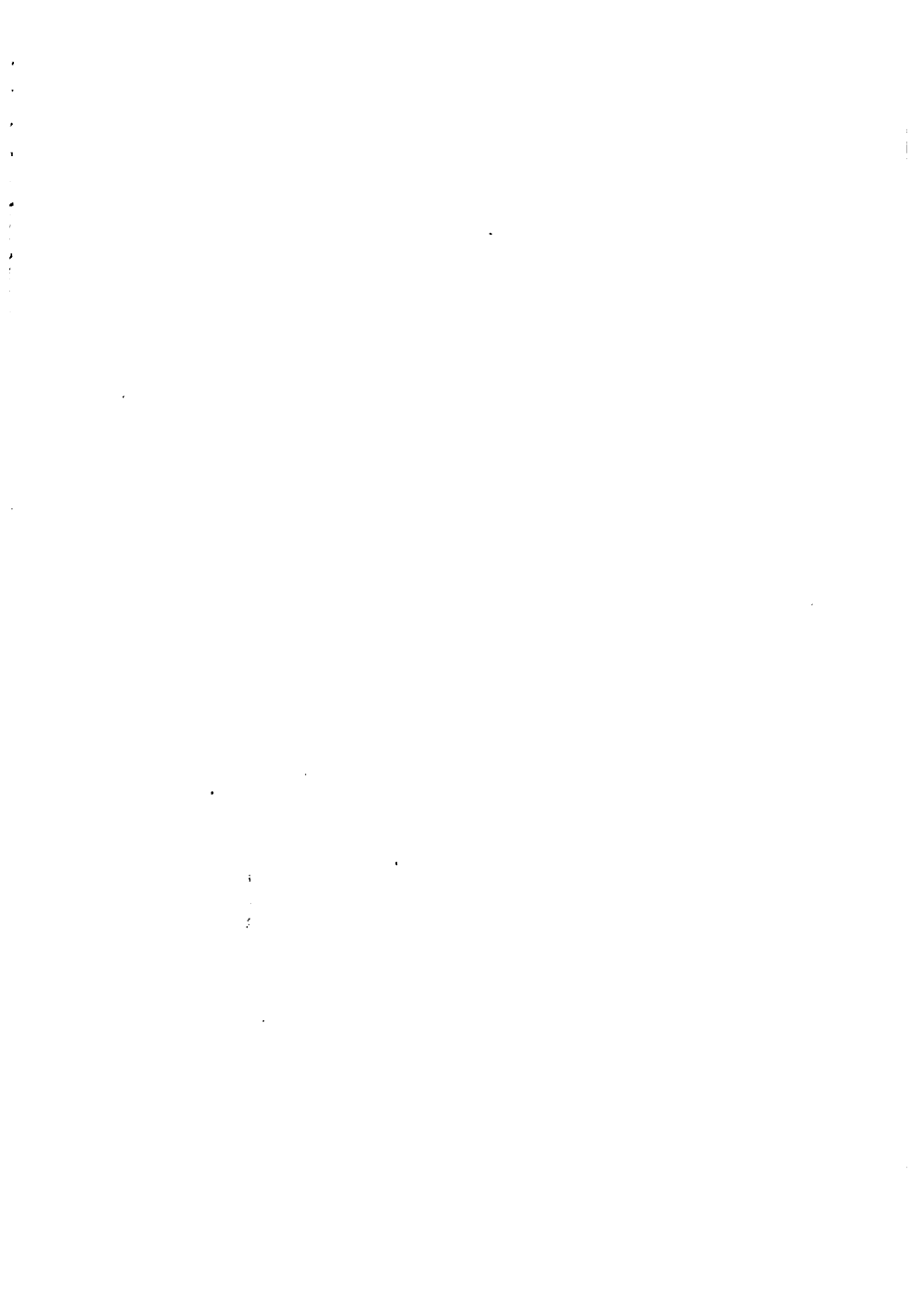
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We go our way, believing in the gods  
And one another, fearless of the end."  
But now Apollo near'd her. "Thee and thine  
One end awaits, Marpessa. Night by night  
The silent boatman bears to silent shores  
The voiceless ghosts of lovers such as ye.  
My loves become immortal. Time nor Change  
Can touch those favor'd of the deathless gods.  
If thou wilt love me thou shalt dwell with me  
In everlasting splendor, and be praised  
By men yet formless in the future's womb."  
But now Marpessa laugh'd. "Where Idas goes,  
My little ones must follow," she replied.  
"Shall I forsake them in that bitter place,  
And leave them lonely? Could a poet's song  
Make shame less shameful? Oh! thou knowest  
not,

Bright god of morning, of the heart, that is  
A wife's and mother's. Could I stay with thee  
And hear thee singing while mine own were  
crouch'd

In misty hell? And would thy kisses make  
My sorrow for their desolation less?  
Supreme art thou and very beautiful;  
But though thy lips have quiver'd with the song  
That thrills the holy cedars, in thy heart  
Abides no love, nor aught of tenderness  
If thus thou judgest women." And again





## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

She laugh'd to think how Idas worship'd her,  
And how she loved him. But, while yet she  
laugh'd,

Apollo seized her. "Thou art mine," he cried,  
And press'd his burning lips upon her own.

"Thy constancy shall vanish as the dew  
Forsakes its love, the pallid asphodel,  
When sunbeams woo it. When I sing to thee  
Thy pulse shall quicken; when my heart shall  
beat

Above thine own, thine eyes shall read in mine  
Such dreams as force forgetfulness of all  
Thy former dreamings. Thou shalt love me  
yet.

Thy hand shall yet caress me, and thy lips  
Shall cling to mine until all space shall seem  
Too tiny for our swooning." And while yet  
The forest echo'd with her bitter cry,  
And all grew dark around her, in his arms  
Apollo bore his burden from the glade.



IS listless dogs behind him, through the  
woods

Strode Idas, singing. In a gloomy spot,  
Where never satyr sprawl'd beneath the trees  
Or teasing fauns dismay'd the restive deer,



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

The lip-raised bear had met him. Silently  
They faced each other, and the waiting dogs  
Whined to attack their ancient enemy.  
Then from his bow the hunter shot a shaft  
That whizz'd its song of death, and in the throat  
Of it, the hunted, pitilessly lodged.  
And while the brown brute lunged to challenge  
them,  
The dogs sprang forward; but the bear was  
quick,  
And smote with thick and danger-dealing paws  
Its rash tormentors. One as suddenly  
Yelp'd and was dead; and then a second shaft,  
By Idas sped from his complaining bow,  
Smote the huge fury in its shaggy breast.  
And now it gave no heed to snapping jaws,  
But, dripping blood from not ignoble wounds,  
O'erlook'd the baser things and sought the man,  
Its equal in the forest. With a roar  
That cow'd the dogs, the bear, uprear'd and  
straight,  
Confronted Idas. But the spear was poised,  
The spear long envied of the Argonauts,  
And, loosed, it travell'd like a thunderbolt  
And smote the bear and drove him back again.  
Then through the vast and bloody cavity  
Pale Death rush'd in and chill'd its mighty  
heart,



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

And closed its angry eyes against the woods.  
And ere the hearten'd dogs could worry it  
The noble beast crash'd down, and was as still  
As is the fell'd tree, slaughter'd in its prime.

But when he reach'd his palace, and had cast  
His shoulder's burden on the gleaming stairs,  
Marpessa did not greet him. Through the halls  
He strode and call'd her, but his children's cries  
Apprised him she was absent. Then of them  
That eyed him mutely, faithful servitors  
Still proud to serve, he ask'd in curtest speech  
If one had seen her. But they still were dumb  
And shook their heads while looking on the  
ground.

And though they search'd the palace, cried her  
name

And sought the gardens over, not a sign  
Of lost Marpessa brought the seekers joy.  
But when, at fault, they turn'd to pray the  
gods

Reveal their secret; and with troubled eyes  
Their master follow'd them, a blind old hound  
Much favor'd of Marpessa bay'd the woods;  
And ever sniffing as she cross'd the grass  
Went slowly forward, baying as she went.  
Then Idas knew; and shouting to the slaves  
To guard his children as they would their lives,



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

He grasp'd his spear and follow'd. Yard by  
yard

The hound went on, while Idas spoke to her,  
Impatient, yet all-grateful for her aid.  
And on and on, beneath the self-same pines  
That saw on other days such happenings  
As he might find delight in; through such glades  
Where Dian heard her moon-enamor'd maids  
Relate the day's adventures; how the deer  
Escaped their arrows, or a drowsy herd  
Gazed at their limbs with unbelieving eyes  
And fell asleep again. But Idas' thoughts  
Were fix'd on his Marpessa, and his gaze  
Was strain'd upon the distance. Bush and tree  
Seem'd fraught with menace to the one he loved,  
And therefore hateful; so he hurried on  
Behind the hound, and cheer'd her with his  
voice.

And once she whined, and turn'd, then turn'd  
again

And bay'd the louder; for her scent was keen  
Although her eyes were useless. Overhead  
The sun had cross'd the midline of the sky,  
And slanting beams now fill'd the drowsy woods  
With afternoon's still glory; bush and tree  
Alike seem'd golden, and a golden sheen  
Fell on the upturn'd faces of the flowers.  
But little now reck'd Idas of the hour,





## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

And little of its beauty. Ah! what sight  
Might blind his eyes when once the baying  
ceased

That now seem'd Hope's own music? Had the  
pool

Forever closed above her? Or would she,  
With lilies far less white and delicate,  
Stare from its edge with fix'd, unseeing eyes  
Upon the blue above them? Then he thought  
Of how the bear had almost conquer'd him,  
And saw her bruised and mangled in the fern.  
But on and on the blind hound, baying, went  
With Idas close behind her. Nearing now  
The shadow'd pool, his heart grew heavier;  
But while he steel'd himself to learn the fate  
Of all he loved and cherish'd, once again  
The hound stood still and sniff'd uneasily  
The air about her. Then she whined and slunk  
To where her master waited, glooming now,  
His eyes so useless. Then again she sniff'd  
The air itself, unmindful of the grass,  
And seem'd at fault; but ever from the pool  
Would turn her head. And Idas petted her;  
But though she knew his meaning, on the grass  
She lay and whined with fine, uplifted head,  
And would not move. Then Idas left her there  
To seek behind the bushes, finding naught,



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

And so came back, and watch'd her. Now he  
knew

That she was borne from that well-trodden path  
That cleft the forest to the shelter'd pool  
By some grim enemy, or beast or man;  
And while his hands were eager to bequeath  
Red death on aught that held her, in his heart  
Her face alone was imaged, only hers.

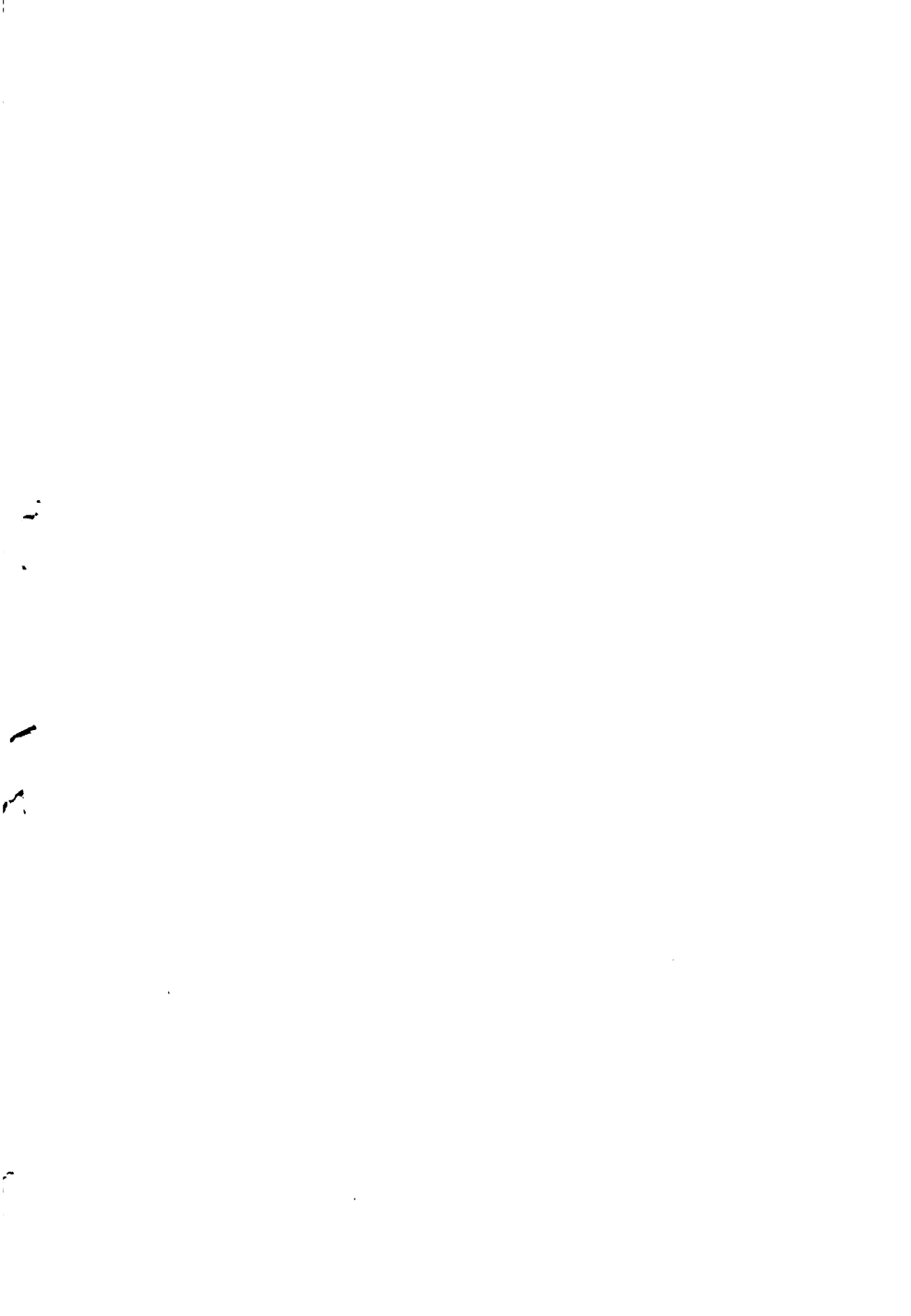
But while he wonder'd at the hound's distress,  
And bade her seek and find again the scent,  
There came a first, faint puff of perfumed wind  
From off the mountains, and the hound leap'd  
up

Alert and silent; then she sniff'd again  
And ever grew more eager. And at last,  
When sure she seem'd of something, something  
hid

From Idas' understanding, through the woods  
Her full-mouth'd baying boom'd. Then on  
again,

With head erect as if her eyes could see,  
The faithful brute proceeded; ever on  
Now whining and now baying. And behind  
Strode eager Idas, firm-lipp'd, resolute,  
And hard his hand embraced his trusted spear.

The sun was setting ere he came on them.  
While yet afar Marpessa heard the hound,



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

And cried to Idas, knowing he was near.  
And he had leap'd to clasp her, calling her  
In tones that voiced his anguish, asking not  
Why thus he found her with the god of song;  
But scorning him and hating. But the god  
Still kept them parted, and had taunted him  
With mocking words, the while confronting him.  
"Fly hence while yet thou may'st," he cried to  
him.

"Thy wife is mine. Death holds his shroud  
o'er thee;

But she has turn'd her glances to the heights  
Where I abide in splendor. Mine she is;  
And me she loves for my immortal song  
And all that makes me god-like." Hearing him  
It seem'd to Idas that the gods had rock'd  
The petty world, and that along with it  
He totter'd to destruction. In his ears,  
As booming seas may thunder in a cave,  
A roaring menace sounded, and he clutch'd  
The air about him wildly, giddily,  
And could not speak; could only clutch the air,  
And stare at her whose name he could not say  
Despite his heart's deep longing. But the voice  
Of pale Marpessa cried across the dusk:  
"I love thee, Idas! In its constancy  
My heart so steep'd is that it laughs at death.  
The wolf will better rear our little ones



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Than this bright Splendor who has threaten'd  
us ;

And, rather than be his, and dwell in light,  
I'd feel once more thy lips upon mine eyes,  
Hear once thy voice assure me of thy love,  
And, with thine arm about me, seek the mists."

And though he could not answer her as yet,  
He look'd his yearning, stunn'd and impotent  
To cry his grief, but longing to unite

His iron hands around the marble throat  
Of him who ever eyed him with disdain.

And still Apollo mock'd him: "She shall sit  
With me in glory, and shall lean to me  
When thou art long forgotten. At her feet  
I heap my gifts of immortality

And love eternal. Go, while I am kind;  
Thy wife my love is. If I stare at thee  
Thy days are ended." And again she cried,

As one who sees her loved one perishing:

"I love thee, Idas, who art all to me ;"

And fain had touch'd him with her trembling  
hand,

But could not. And while yet she gazed at  
him

With love and anguish in the eyes so dear,  
He found his speech and thunder'd: "God thou  
art,

But foul seducer also. In the woods





## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Are they that hate thee—Isse, Chione,  
And Zephyrus, whom Hyacinthus scorn'd.  
Despite thy splendor, and thy gift of song,  
Loathsome thou art to things of purity,  
Defiler and vain boaster. In the skies  
Thy station is, to serve the Thunderer,  
Lest, anger'd, he chastise thee. Sweet thy  
hymns

In ears that still are strangers to the songs  
Of earth's dear birds. The while thou gleamest  
there

Thou art a menace, and the foe of all  
That makes our short-year'd life seem bearable.  
I hate thee, and would rid the woods of thee.  
Now aid thou me, great Zeus, a simple man,  
Yet righteous in my anger and my love.  
Guide thou my spear, and tip its point with  
death

That I may slay this robber, win mine own,  
And bless thee for thy succour." Swiftly then  
He hurl'd the dart, but slipp'd and saw it pierce  
An oak behind Apollo. And the god,  
Now bright with anger, tore the quiv'ring shaft  
From out the tree and posed to hurtle it  
Against defenceless Idas. Even now  
The mists were heavy in Marpessa's eyes,  
And she was praying for the man she loved,



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

When lo! the shades were scatter'd. In their  
midst

Stood one of grave, majestic countenance,

As golden as Apollo, but serene

And conscious of his power. Then to the earth

The spear was lower'd, and Marpessa's hand

Was raised in supplication. But the eyes

Of him that stood there were the eyes of one

Who awed all men to silence, and her words

Remain'd unutter'd in her anguish'd breast.

Then, turning first to where Apollo gleam'd,

He eyed him gravely. "Is dissension sweet,"

He ask'd, and pointed to the lower'd spear,

"That thus ye fight when from the western skies

My glory is departing? From the soil

Sweet incense rises, and the trees are still'd

In solemn adoration. Even now

The stars prepare to smile upon the world,

And all is hush'd. The spear is in thy hand;

Thy brow is anger'd. I await thy words."

And then Apollo storm'd. "The maid is mine,

I love her. She would share——" But Idas

now

Strode hotly forward. "O great Zeus," he

cried,

"The bright god lies! This woman is my wife,

My loved Marpessa. We are wed, are one.

Thy praise we sing together, and our babes



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Await her in their cradle. She is mine.”  
And then the wroth Apollo frown’d at him:  
“If I but speak thou fallest at my feet,  
And hell shall open to receive thy ghost.  
Who, then, art thou to look me in the eyes  
And say: ‘Thou liest’? I can harass thee  
And make thy days a torment. Thou shalt  
learn

My awful vengeance; thou shalt cry to me  
As Jason cried when hurried to his death.”  
But Idas answer’d: “Nay, I fear thee not.  
A man I am and I can die but once.  
Death has for me no terrors. Could I hold  
Thy gleaming hair, I’d stand erect in hell  
And deem my life well ended but to shout:  
‘Behold Apollo, who would harm my wife!’”  
And then again Apollo raised his spear,  
But Zeus commanded and again it dropp’d.  
And then he turn’d to where Marpessa stood,  
All pale and trembling. “It shall rest with  
thee

To choose thy lover,” said the grave-eyed god.  
“But ponder well before thou utterest  
Thy heart’s desire. Beneath these gentle trees  
A hero claims thee, and a gleaming god.  
To each thou art a treasure, but to one  
Thyself thou givest. It shall rest with thee  
To choose thy destiny—to dwell on high



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Or on the earth that is a part of thee.  
Who loves Apollo must be sometimes sad.  
The song that trembles on his crimson lips  
Is heard by many and of many loved.  
The woods are his, the mountains. Where he  
goes

All hearts adore him, but he passes on  
To other conquests and to other loves.  
Apollo says he loves thee. If with him  
Thou goest hence, thou shalt immortal be;  
Shalt watch the birth of worlds, the vanishing  
Of all that now is bright and wonderful.  
Beside me thou shalt sit when life is done.  
The stars shall be thy children, and the winds  
Shall sing thy praises ere the dusk descends.  
And if thy choice be Idas, thou shalt know  
The even bliss of mortals and their griefs.  
The dawn shall wake thee, and the night shall  
bring

Thy head unto its pillow where lies his  
Who shares with thee thy sorrow and thy joy.  
Thy babes will love thee, but shall some day go  
Beyond the silent longing of thine eyes,  
Beyond thy hand's caresses. Even he,  
Whose hair turns whiter while thou kissest it,  
Must go at last; and thou must follow him,  
And bid farewell to light and all that made  
Thy little day seem perfect. Being gone





## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Thou soon shalt be forgotten. Few are they  
Whose names are number'd with the names of  
stars;

Thy little pleasure must be had to-day.  
For man is dust. His dreams are of the sky;  
But all the toys that bring him happiness  
Lie strewn between his cradle and his grave."

And while he spoke, Marpessa forward lean'd  
As if to choose; but with commanding eyes  
The grave god held her while he spoke again.  
"Apollo's hand would raise thee to the heights;  
But Sorrow's face in airy solitudes  
Is not unknown, for she is everywhere  
Where hearts may beat. She, too, will follow  
thee

If thou with Idas goest. At her knees  
Ye both must kneel when that dark hour comes  
That comes alike to those whom Love makes one  
And those whom Love ne'er blesses. Choose  
thou now."

And while Apollo eyed her haughtily,  
Too sure of conquest, Idas lean'd to her  
With outstretch'd arms, still hungry for her  
love

And fearful she might leave him. But his doubt  
Was vain and idle, as a man's doubt is—  
Who learns what love is only when 't is lost;  
For, laughing now, Marpessa ran to him,



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Heedless of bright Apollo or of Zeus,  
And with her arms close-twined about his neck  
Cried: "Idas! O my Idas!" Thus they gazed  
In eyes where tears were welling; thus they  
stood

To all oblivious save their happy selves,  
And said no word, but gazed, and gazed again.  
And when at last they turn'd, it was to find  
The gods had vanish'd and themselves alone.  
Alone they stood amid the leafy peace,  
Beneath the skies where now gleam'd wondrously  
The blessed star of even; in their hearts  
The love that cares not what the future holds,  
Nor ever dreams of death; and at their feet  
The blind old hound, awaiting their caress.

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